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Simple Italian Sandwiches

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with Kathryn Kellinger

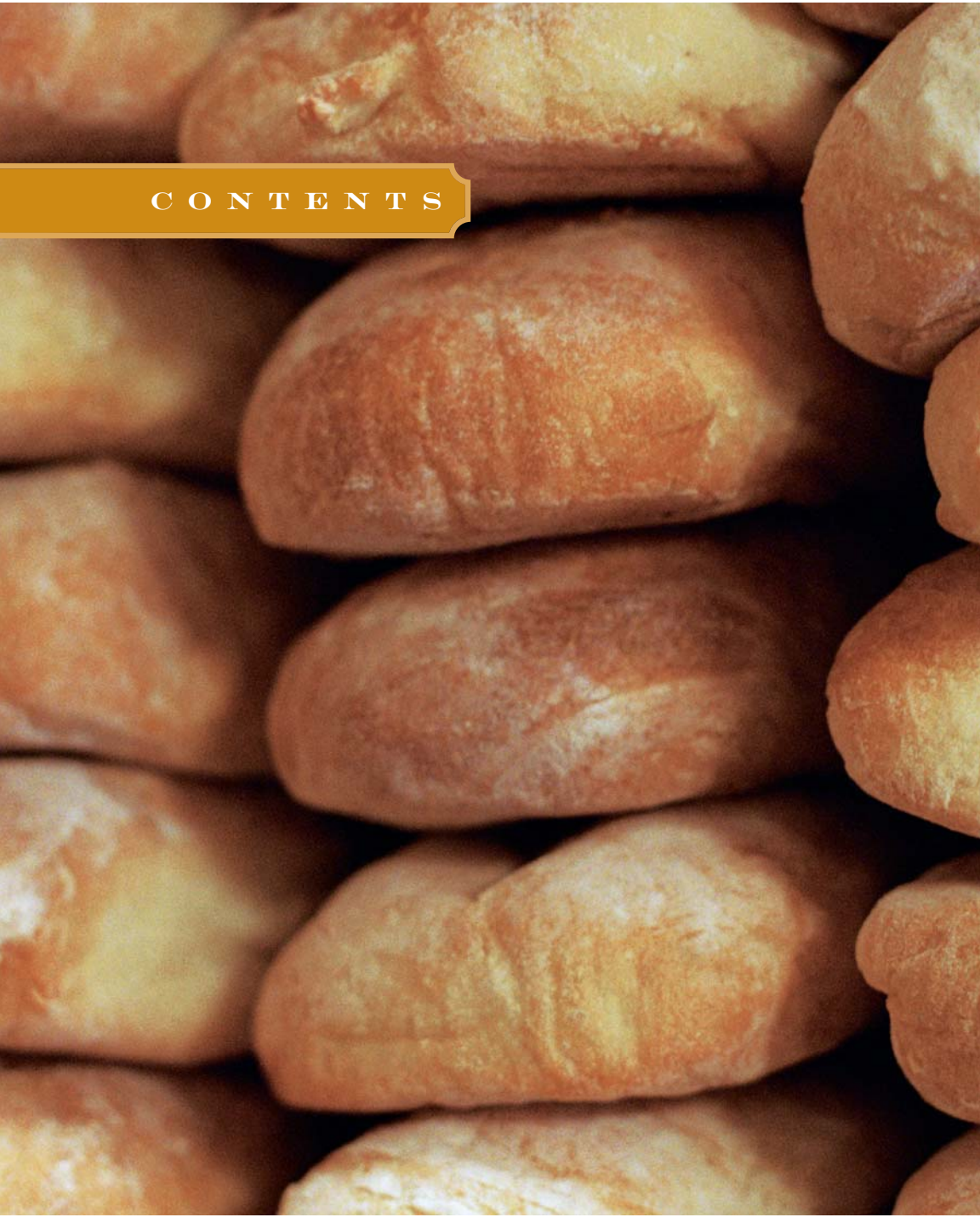
JENNIFER AND JASON DENTON

WITH KATHRYN KELLINGER

SIMPLE ITALIAN SANDWICHES

RECIPES FROM AMERICA'S FAVORITE PANINI BAR

FOR JACK AND FINN DENTON,
MAYA AND REID HANSON—
the real fruits of our labor



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FOREWORD

by Mario Batali

There are a million ways that the Italians are different from Americans. From the way we dress to the way we think about soccer, we are at once fascinated by and yet critical of each other's cultures.

There are probably a thousand differences just in the gastronomic category, but one of the most obvious is the treatment of the sandwich. America is known for its pastrami on rye, its cheese steaks and grinders, and in Chicago its Italian beef. In general, however, sandwiches are consumed out of convenience and are relatively standard in their construction, with two slices of bread, the meat and/or dairy protein, and then mustard, mayo, and optional lettuce and tomato.

In Italian culture there are panini and tramezzini. The amount of thought implicit in the execution of panini throughout the entire boot

is in itself a testament to the greatness of the birthplace of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. A properly made panino, bruschetta, or tramezzini is a symphony of simple flavors and textures, its greatness often ascending to the level of a Bach cantata or a Verdi aria.

My favorite place to eat in Italy is a fast-food chain, but these *auto-grille* restaurants are temples of gastronomic magnificence and are found every seventy-five kilometers on the autostrada highway system. Behind the Italian equivalent of the American golden arches lies culinary bliss.

I have known Jason and Jennifer Denton since I first arrived in New York City. When they told me that they were going to open a little sammie shop called 'ino in the West Village, I thought that it was a cute idea and bid them good luck. And when I watched them open with no ventilation and a thirty-square-foot kitchen, I snickered but came in to show my support. That was seven (how many?) years ago. Since then, 'ino has become the favorite New York haunt of a great number of the great chefs and restaurateurs from around the country. One of the two reasons for this is the natural hospitality of the Dentons. The other

reason is the greatness of the actual food itself. 'ino has captured the dichotomy of the simplicity of construction and the complexity of flavors and textures. This is an excellent example of the whole being much more than the sum of its parts. And so we have this excellent and properly brief tome.

I can safely say that I have eaten every single dish in this book, not as an adviser or a paid consultant but as a fan and a chef. When I am out on the town entertaining other chefs, who, like myself, grow tired of fancy restaurants and baroque compositions, we drop by 'ino. We feel quite at home, after midnight at the bar or at one of the small tables. Any reader and amateur cook can, in very little time and with very little effort, create this feeling for themselves at their own table. *Buon appetito*.

INTRODUCTION

It's already too many years ago that, while traveling in Italy, we fell in love with a lifestyle. This lifestyle existed in its most perfect form in a little bar on the Ligurian coast. It was run by a lone guy who poured wine, spun records, and made some of the most satisfying toasted sandwiches we'd ever tasted. Made from a few tasty, simple ingredients and browned on a hot press, they were little masterpieces of taste, texture, and proportion. The fact that they were inexpensive only sweetened the deal. The wines were friendly, the music perfect, and the locals were cool characters straight from central casting. We couldn't get enough of it.

The sandwiches and other bread-based delicacies that we ate every day in Italy were a far cry from the overstuffed sandwiches that we were used to back home in New York. For light, easy meals, there were panini, toasted, thin, and crunchy sandwiches with a perfect balance of bread to savory interior. Bruschetta made an ideal accompaniment to an afternoon glass of wine—slices of toasted bread topped with the most flavorful combinations of simple ingredients. And then there were

tramezzini: sandwiches on fresh white bread, untoasted, where egg salad had a subtle boost of flavor from easy additions of capers or sliced asparagus. The ingredients in all were fresh and simple, but the combinations—in the way that sweet flavors would lie underneath salty, and creamy would be smooth over crunchy—were, to our minds, nothing short of sophisticated. We wanted to transport all of it back home; a no-frills approach to good living and good eating.

Back in our own charming coastal village, New York City's Greenwich Village, we took the skeleton of an idea and our love for what we'd experienced and signed on the dotted line. With borrowed money we set forth to create for ourselves and our neighborhood that same kind of place. While we'd had some restaurant experience, we relied mostly on our Italian memories to build a menu with the same balance of textures, same dynamic flavors, and especially the same quality paired with simplicity we'd encountered in Italy.

Our new restaurant was a tiny storefront, but we were sure we could make it work. It would be a small space where one could sit and enjoy a small breakfast, lunch, or dinner. It was Italian food expert Faith Willinger who came up with the name 'ino, an Italian diminutive suffix, indicating all things small and almost precious; *bocca* (or mouth) is the root of bocconcini, or little mouthfuls of mozzarella, miniature red peppers are known as pepperoncini, and pane (or bread) when made into small adorable sandwiches become panini. It was a perfect fit.

The one-man Ligurian band that had inspired us provided a blueprint for how we would run our own place. With no room for an actual kitchen, we had to devise ways of preparing everything in a toaster oven or on a hot plate. Our heavy-duty panini press arrived from Italy and took up most of our counter space. The bar was stocked with affordable wines. We opened to customers who, used to the immediate gratification of a deli sandwich, wondered why they had to wait for their panini to be toasted. We offered them samples of our bruschetta while they waited, and poured them a glass of sparkling Prosecco, encouraging them to try the full scope of our small menu. We began to build a devoted neighborhood of regulars.

Over the years, we found that our restaurant recipes translate perfectly to the American home kitchen, where we, like most working parents, want to serve delicious food to family and friends without spending much time making it. Simple enough for the novice cook yet sophisticated and tasty enough for anyone who loves good food, these are the simple recipes that we serve again and again in our home for small dinners or big poolside parties. With maximum flavor and minimal cooking, panini, bruschetta, and tramezzini allow us to prepare food for a crowd and then sit down to enjoy it with them. With simplicity as the governing rule for our busy schedules, our table is always full of good friends and good food, thanks to this fast and fun style of eating and entertaining.

BASICS

TOP-QUALITY INGREDIENTS ARE THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF all types of good cooking. This is especially true for sandwiches where every bite counts. From the bread to the olive oil, we believe that each component of everything we eat should be delicious on its own.

THE BREAD

When it comes to panini, bruschetta, and tramezzini, it begins and ends with the bread. Thanks to its heft and structure, excellent bread is the foundation for an excellent sandwich. Ideally, bread brings out the best in what it's carrying. Soft and yielding bread is the best bet for a moist and gently seasoned filling, while a crusty, well-developed slice works best with more assertive ingredients. With so much variety out there, every style of bread has a use for which it is best suited. These are the ones that we prefer for our Italian sandwiches.

CIABATTA

Ciabatta, our number one pick for panini, means slipper in Italian and these rolls are said to resemble them. Oval shaped, with a domed top, the combination of a ciabatta's crusty outside and airy interior makes them an ideal showcase for toasted panini. For perfect proportion, we make a slight alteration: Slice off the domed top (which can be toasted and served with cheese or soup) and then slice the ciabatta in half horizontally so that each half is approximately 1/2 inch thick, leaving a crusted bottom and an exposed, crustless top. This allows for a perfect bread-to-filling ratio and provides some crust with each bite. The crustless side of the roll toasts beautifully in the press, deepening to a golden brown. If ciabatta aren't available, focaccia or hearty peasant bread also possesses the right texture and depth; slice the focaccia into 5-inch squares and then halve horizontally, or slice the peasant bread so that each piece is about 1/2 inch thick and about 5 inches wide. Kaiser rolls will do in a pinch. Even English muffins look pretty good at 3:00 A.M. as a last resort.

WHITE SANDWICH BREAD

White sandwich bread is called for when serving delicate, elegant tramezzini. These crustless sandwiches with moist fillings (think tea sandwiches) call for a neat slice with a fine crumb. A bakery-bought Pullman loaf (also called pain de mie) is the best choice. Arnold Brick Oven White is an excellent supermarket option for uniformly square tramezzini. Whichever white slice you use, make sure it's fresh and soft. Slicing off the crusts is mandatory.

BAGUETTE

Ironically, we reach for a French baguette when making Italian bruschetta. With their well-developed texture and crusty nature, grilled baguette slices stand up to hearty, moist ingredients like roasted garlic or a slab of Taleggio cheese. A classic Italian loaf, a French miche, or a slice of rustic peasant bread would all perform well as bruschetta or, as crostini, their smaller, crisper counterparts.

THE MEAT

Our sandwiches and appetizers are constructed from a rich array of Italian cold cuts, aromatic and flavorful, with textures that range from fine and silky to marbled and grainy. We seek out the genuine article from Italian butchers, delis, or gourmet shops. The best examples are made by hand. All of them taste best when served at room temperature.

BRESAOLA

Bresaola is beef cured in salt and then air-dried. Purchase it on the same day you intend to eat it, as it can dry out quickly. Besides using it in a sandwich, serve it as a classic first course (Bresaola with Arugula and Parmigiano-Reggiano, page 120).

CACCIATORINI

This small, mildly spiced cured pork salami is said to be the perfect size for hunters (in Italian, *cacciatore*) to snack on while they're out bagging dinner. Along with a cutting board and a small sharp knife, cacciatorini is part of a delicious, casual antipasti platter.

CAPICOLLO

Made from the shoulder and head of a pig (or *copa*), coppa, as it is also known, is a rugged salami with knobs of fat throughout. It is available in both hot and sweet varieties.

MORTADELLA

A regional specialty from Bologna, mortadella is distinguished from its common American cousin, bologna, by the cubed lard and hearty black peppercorns studded throughout. Mortadella has a subtle, spiced pork flavor with a luxurious silky texture. Thinly slice for sandwiches.

PANCETTA

An unsmoked cured bacon, pancetta is sold in Italian delis and specialty food shops. Take home an unsliced hunk from a large salami-like roll, dice, and brown in a sauté pan. Use the diced pancetta in salads, to flavor frittatas, or make our Italian BLT (page 93).

PROSCIUTTO

These pig legs travel a great journey before making it to the sliced meat counter of high-end groceries. In the town of Parma, the hams are salted and hung to cure, during which time the salt makes its way through the dense flesh, drawing out the moisture. This process naturally kills all bacteria and the hams are then aged for at least ten months or up to two years. The flavor develops during this period, and the great hams shrink and ferment, becoming more and more delicious. Prosciutto di Parma is the most famous of the Italian hams prepared in this centuries-old method of preservation, with San Daniele coming in second (thanks to the significantly smaller production). With both prosciuttos you'll find round, full flavor, delicate sweetness, and silky texture. Prosciutto is a wonderful addition to any table, one of those simple snacks that never cease to be special.

PROSCIUTTO COTTO

Prosciutto cotto (meaning cooked ham) remains the common cousin to the glamorous *crudo* (cured or raw) hams. Prosciutto cotto is brined and cooked; it will remind Americans of the ham they grew up eating with Swiss on rye. If prosciutto cotto isn't available, purchase an unsmoked sliced domestic ham.

SOPPRESSATA

Made of coarsely ground pork, spicy soppressata is most similar to what Americans call salami. Made with hot or sweet seasonings, soppressata is addictive, delicious enough to be layered into sandwiches or for eating by hand—or both simultaneously. These days it can be found in most supermarkets.

THE CHEESE

Since cheeses are the element that often melds and marries the flavors of toasted sandwiches, we select them both for the flavor they contribute to the sandwich as well as their strength under pressure—the pressure and heat of a panini grill. We want the cheeses to be warm and relaxed, but not stringy and gooey. Lightly melted and warm throughout is the goal. The cheeses we use have distinctive but mild flavors that are well suited for sandwiches and bruschetta.

ASIAGO

A commonly available hard cheese that we grate or slice thinly by hand. If Asiago isn't available, substitute Grana Padano or Parmigiano-Reggiano.

BEL PAESE

While this cheese is often thought of as the Italian equivalent of wrapped American singles, we like it for its meltability and mild taste, making it a winner with those who don't like cheese with more assertive flavors. Bel Paese (meaning "beautiful country") is sold in supermarkets.

CACIO DI ROMA

One of the many hard sheep's milk cheeses of Italy. Grated or thinly sliced by hand, Cacio di Roma adds a light, creamy tang to sandwiches or salads. A Pecorino Romano can stand in its place.

CROTONESE

A strong-flavored sheep's milk cheese made in the south, Crotonese has a distinct aroma. Available at specialty cheese shops. A Pecorino Romano makes a fine stand-in.

FONTINA

Not to be confused with the Scandinavian varieties, Italian Fontina d'Aosta, a semifirm cow's milk cheese, has a deep taste and long finish. The same qualities that make this the best cheese for fonduta (similar to Swiss fondue) make it a standout for panini: complex

flavors and an ability to melt gently and uniformly. The authentic imported article is cut from a large wheel with the word "Fontina" stenciled on the center. The red wax-covered hunks sold in supermarkets will work, but it's worth seeking out genuine Italian Fontina.

GRANA PADANO

A category encompassing any hard cow's milk cheese suitable for grating. Grana Padano (meaning "of the Po River," the area where these cheeses are made) can be thought of as Parmigiano-Reggiano without the pedigree. Aged for only six months, the milk for Grana can come from anywhere, and it can be made at any time of year, unlike Parmigiano-Reggiano, which is governed by strict rules of production. Grana can be quite good, and it costs less than Parmigiano-Reggiano. As with all hard grating cheeses, a good Grana should feel moist and firm, but not oily.

PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO

One of the world's great cheeses, Parmigiano-Reggiano is made in northern Italy from only the milk of cows deemed acceptable by the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano, an Italian governing cheese body. A hefty wheel of Parmigiano-Reggiano is aged for at least two years. Chunks are chipped away from the great wheels to be grated, shaved, or eaten in bite-sized chunks. The flavor is nutty and complex, and the buttery texture is punctuated with a surprising crunch. Look for the seal of the Consorzio on authentic wheels of this most excellent cheese.

PECORINO ROMANO

Perhaps the most widely made sheep's milk cheese, this sharp, salty, grating cheese has a somewhat oily texture and a pleasant taste. Buy in pieces to shave or grate just before using.

PECORINO PEPATO

Virtually all regions of southern Italy make a Pecorino. This one, studded with whole black peppercorns, adds bite that balances the cheese's inherent saltiness.

RICOTTA FRESCA

Snowy white ricotta has a fresh milk taste with a cool, creamy texture. The name means "recooked" and that's how this fresh cheese is made: by reheating the whey that remains after milk curds are formed into other cheeses such as Parmigiano-Reggiano or moz-

zarella. Sheep's milk ricotta has a deliciously tangy taste. A small bowl of fresh ricotta is as comfortable on the antipasti table as it is on the breakfast table. Ricotta is versatile and can be served alongside both sweet and savory dishes. For the best flavor, skip the supermarket and buy it from the cheese shop.

TALEGGIO

This northern Italian cow's milk cheese is sold in paper-wrapped, 8-inch squares. Taleggio has a washed rind and the kind of creamy interior often associated with fine French cheeses. The flavor can vary from producer to producer, but count on a pronounced personality and a buttery texture. It is particularly delicious after a meal with a glass of wine as a course unto itself.

OTHER ESSENTIALS

EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

A magic elixir, extra virgin olive oil has the power to transform and elevate almost everything it touches. Extra virgin refers to the first, cold-press of ripe olives between large stone wheels, extracting the most flavorful and easily released juices. Extra virgin olive oil is deeply colored (from golden to green), and has a flavor that can range from grassy to peppery. We drizzle extra virgin olive oil on almost everything from our morning eggs to late-night toast. After the first, cold-press, subsequent presses rely on heat and a more strenuous extraction, resulting in what is commonly labeled simply "olive oil." This oil is less expensive, less flavorful, and has a somewhat greasier character. We use plain olive oil in the sauté pan, where its sturdier makeup and easier price tag make it indisputably useful.

ACETO BALSAMICO TRADIZIONALE

The genuine article, true balsamic vinegar, is the product of aging for periods of up to twenty-five years. This can reduce a barrel of vinegar to about 10 percent of its original contents. What's left is rich, dense, sweet, sour, and complex. The high cost of this long and loving relationship (played out in the cellars of Modena) is, of course, passed on to consumers.

Like good salt and great olive oil, this is one of those pantry items that can drastically enhance the flavor of whatever you're serving. With such a high return on the investment, aged balsamic vinegar is definitely worth the splurge. (Visit Zingermans.com for a six-year-old vinegar that's reasonably priced.) If you have no Aceto Balsamico on hand, bring 1 cup of the commonly sold balsamic vinegar to a simmer in a small saucepan. Let it bubble away until about ¼ cup remains. It will be dark and thick with a concentrated flavor, a budget-conscious approximation of authenticity.

OIL AND VINEGAR

Squeeze bottles are often cited as indispensable in the professional kitchens. We agree, especially when making bruschetta; nine times out of ten, we finish a bruschetta with a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil or balsamic vinegar. Squeeze bottles allow for fingertip control, the perfect pour. They're the ultimate in olive oil control.

CAPERBERRIES

The same thorny shrub that produces the flower buds known as capers also gives us a larger fruit called the caperberry. Growing in the wild, both the caper and the caperberry get their flavor from pickling. Buy brined caperberries for their oily flesh and superior texture. Find them in better grocery stores or online.

CONDIMENTI

GREAT SANDWICHES START WITH GREAT INGREDIENTS. HOMEMADE mayonnaise, pestos, and mustards all contribute to making a sandwich memorable.

All of these condimentos can be made ahead and refrigerated. Most can be whipped up in a blender or food processor in just minutes, so having a few of them on hand allows for impromptu sandwich greatness. Spread these on bread, whisk them into scrambled eggs, or eat them by the spoonful while standing in the kitchen.

BASIL PESTO

It was pesto that inspired us to open 'ino—the best pesto we'd ever had, in Monterosso on the Ligurian coast of Italy. While traveling in the region, we found the pesto was so compelling, so delicious that we began eating it everywhere we went—from fine restaurants to street vendors. We gobbled up all that we could, intent on finding a way to re-create the vibrancy of Italian pesto using American basil. We learned that a little softened butter added at the end was the Ligurian secret to a more full-flavored pesto.

MAKES 1 CUP

- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup walnuts
- 2 tablespoons pine nuts
- ½ garlic clove
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups tightly packed fresh basil leaves, rinsed and spun dry
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano (using the small holes of a box grater)
- 1 tablespoon butter, softened to room temperature

1. In a blender or a food processor, combine the olive oil, walnuts, pine nuts, garlic, and salt. Pulse or blend until smooth. Add the basil, in small handfuls, and pulse to combine. When all the basil has been incorporated, transfer to a bowl and add the Parmigiano-Reggiano and softened butter, mixing well to combine. The olive oil should form a 1-inch layer above the pesto (this keeps the air out, allowing the pesto to retain its vivid color).
2. Store, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. Let come to room temperature and stir well before using.

SUN-DRIED TOMATO PESTO

Sun-dried tomatoes are the perfect way to marry meat with cheese on sandwiches, bring brightness to bruschetta, or add depth to salad dressings. From pastas to frittatas, our Sun-dried Tomato Pesto enhances countless dishes. Covered and stored in the refrigerator, this pesto will keep for up to a week.

Sun-dried tomatoes can be bought dried or packed in oil. We prefer the dried version for their sunny sweet flavor. We find that the brighter the dried tomatoes, the sweeter the flavor. Darker ones tend to be bitter.

MAKES 1 CUP

4 ounces sun-dried tomatoes

1½ cups extra virgin olive oil

1. Coarsely chop the sun-dried tomatoes. Combine them with the olive oil in a medium bowl and let soak for 15 minutes.

2. Transfer the sundried tomatoes and oil to a food processor. Pulse the tomatoes until they form a smooth, moist paste. Transfer the pesto to a resealable, airtight container. The pesto can be stored, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. The oil, which will preserve the pesto's color and flavor, should form a ¼- to ½-inch-thick layer on top of the pesto. Add additional oil if necessary. Stir before using.

LEMON MAYONNAISE

We want our tramezzini to have the same moist, rich taste as their authentic Italian counterparts. This eggier mayonnaise with its rounder, fatter taste makes it happen. A blender makes perfectly emulsified mayo: Add the olive oil in a slow, steady stream and mayonnaise success will be yours. Variations follow for custom-flavored mayos. Save your best extra virgin olive oil for another use. Mayonnaise calls for a mild oil that has neither a pronounced taste nor color, so the less expensive olive oils are a better choice here.

MAKES 2 CUPS

5 large egg yolks
1½ tablespoons water
Juice of 1 lemon
2 teaspoons salt
1¾ cups olive oil

1. In a blender set to a slow speed, combine the egg yolks, water, lemon juice, and salt.

2. Partially cover the open blender with a towel to cut down on splatter and increase the speed to high. Begin adding the olive oil in a slow and steady stream (this should take 5 to 7 minutes). As the mayonnaise begins to thicken, the towel will no longer be necessary and the noise from the blender will lessen. Watch as the mayonnaise thickens, being careful to maintain the slow stream of the olive oil being added.

3. Store the mayonnaise in a bowl covered with plastic wrap or in a plastic tub with a tight-fitting lid for up to 4 days.

ROASTED GARLIC MAYONNAISE

Follow the above recipe, adding ¾ cup Balsamic Roasted Garlic (page 19) after the mayonnaise has come together (the end of step 2).

RED PEPPER MAYONNAISE

Follow the above recipe, adding ¾ cup Peperonata (page 23) after the mayonnaise has come together (the end of step 2).

'iho
- antipasti
- panini
- insalate
- VINO
- espresso
- cappuccino

BALSAMIC ROASTED GARLIC

This is the workhorse of our kitchen—we use it to flavor salad dressings, our Toscana Chicken Liver Tramezzini (page 98), and mayonnaise, but it gets top billing in our Roasted Garlic and Arugula Oil Bruschetta (page 73). The mellow garlic flavor takes on an edge from balsamic vinegar that reduces gently over the course of two additions. It would be a waste to use fine, expensive vinegar here—go supermarket style.

MAKES 1 CUP

2 cups peeled garlic cloves (from about 3 heads garlic)

¼ cup balsamic vinegar

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon water

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Spread the garlic over a small baking sheet.
3. Combine the balsamic vinegar, olive oil, water, and black pepper in a small bowl. Spoon half of the vinegar mixture over the garlic and toss to coat.
4. Bake for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the remaining vinegar, mix to coat, and bake for 10 minutes more. Stir and return to the oven for a final 10 minutes. The roasted garlic should be soft, with a burnished brown glazed finish. Store, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. Bring to room temperature and stir before using.

SWEET ONIONS

Sweet and mellow, these onions have deep, sweet flavor. The long, slow roast is the key. Aside from sandwiches, these make a colorful addition to fresh salads.

MAKES 2 CUPS

5 medium red onions (about 6 ounces each)

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

¼ cup balsamic vinegar

1 tablespoon honey

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 250°F.

2. Peel the onions and cut each in half through the stem end, then cut each half into 4 quarters. Finish by cutting the quarters in half horizontally and tossing into a medium bowl.

3. Add the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, honey, and black pepper. Toss to thoroughly coat the onions and pour onto a small baking sheet or into a 9-inch ovenproof skillet (the onions should be piled onto the pan, not spread in a single layer). Set the bowl aside.

4. Cook the onions for a total of 3 hours. Take them out every 30 minutes and transfer back to the bowl to mix thoroughly before rearranging on the baking sheet and putting back into the oven. This keeps any part of the onion slices from drying out and becoming crispy. The moisture in the onions will evaporate to steam the onions to a soft and pliant texture. The sugars will concentrate, and the balsamic vinegar will reduce down to a gentle intensity. This will keep indefinitely in the refrigerator.

HOT MUSTARD

Jason's grandmother, Harriet Denton, always kept the family well supplied with jams, breads, and her spicy-hot mustard. A few years back, she began sending us care packages here in New York, and we started using her mustard on our panini. Not only was it a hit with our customers, we were thrilled to include a little of Harriet's passion for life in our daily passion—our food. She passed the mustard recipe on to us and it's now a standard part of the pantry.

The mustard should be made at least a week in advance and stirred daily. We can attest that it makes a well-loved Christmas gift. A few tablespoons adds kick to any potato salad that you'd serve with hamburgers.

MAKES 2½ CUPS

4 ounces (one whole tin) Colman's dry mustard
1 cup flour
½ cup sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1½ cups white vinegar
2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Combine the dry ingredients in a blender. Pulse to combine, and then add the vinegar and vegetable oil. When thoroughly blended, transfer to a clean jar with a tight-fitting lid (one that formerly held store-bought spaghetti sauce is perfect). Stir daily for 7 days before serving. Like all mustards, this one keeps indefinitely in the refrigerator.

PICKLED ONIONS

Pickling completely changes the flavor of an onion. Just slice and cover with the liquids, and 12 hours later your onion is mellowed, its lifetime expanded.

MAKES 2 CUPS

2 red onions, cut into ⅛-inch slices

1 cup red wine vinegar

1 cup water

1. In a large bowl or a large jar with a lid, submerge the onions in the vinegar and the water. Let sit for at least 12 hours or, covered, up to 2 weeks.

2. Squeeze the excess liquid from the onions before using.

PEPERONATA

As we have no kitchen at 'ino, we had to devise a method of preparing this roasted red pepper condiment is a trusty toaster oven. While this isn't a traditional method, we love the way it almost dehydrates the peppers, intensifying their sweetness.

Besides being a key player in all forms of panini, Peperonata served alongside fresh mozzarella is a stunning combination, one of the all-time best snacks.

MAKES 1½ CUPS

4 red bell peppers, cored, seeded, cut into a 1-inch dice

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

2 teaspoons dried thyme

Pinch of red chile flakes

Kosher salt

1. Preheat the toaster oven or regular oven to 350°F.

2. Combine all the ingredients except the salt in a bowl and toss to completely coat the diced peppers. Pour onto a toaster-oven tray or 9-inch ovenproof sauté pan and bake for 25 minutes, stirring with a spatula every 5 minutes or so, until the peppers are soft. Transfer to a bowl (be sure to pour all of the olive oil/vinegar mixture in as well) and cool to room temperature. Use the same day or refrigerate for up to 3 days. Stir and season with salt to taste just before serving.

OVEN-ROASTED TOMATOES

We love the bright taste that Oven-Roasted Tomatoes lend to sandwiches, but we want them to retain just a bit of their fresh identity. The tomatoes spend time in the oven to reduce their liquid and concentrate their flavor, but are taken out before they reach the shrivel stage. The tomatoes have a nearly fresh texture but a deepened sweet taste.

MAKES 2 CUPS

4 tomatoes, sliced ¼ inch thick
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup balsamic vinegar

1. Preheat the oven to 275°F.

2. Spread the sliced tomatoes on a small foil-lined baking tray (it's fine if they overlap). Season with salt, then drizzle or spoon half of the balsamic vinegar over the tomatoes. Bake for 20 minutes, then drizzle the remaining vinegar over the tomatoes, cooking for 20 minutes more. Transfer to a small bowl. Keep the tomatoes, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

CHERRY PEPPER RELISH

When we're not layering this mildly spicy relish over Prosciutto Cotto (page 5) and Grana Padano (page 7), we use it to spice up any plain old cheese sandwich.

MAKES ½ CUP

- 3 hot cherry peppers
- 3 tablespoons Sweet Onions (page 20)
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon red chile flakes

Combine all the ingredients in a blender and pulse to form a chunky relish. Covered in the refrigerator, the relish will keep for up to 5 days. Stir before using.

BLACK OLIVE PESTO

Black Olive Pesto, or tapenade, can become your sandwich's best friend. Always have some on hand, as you would mayo or mustard.

MAKES 1 CUP

½ pound black olives, preferably Gaettas, pitted, drained of their liquid

2 tablespoons capers, drained

1 garlic clove, peeled

Pinch of red chile flakes

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1. Place all the ingredients except the olive oil in a food processor. Pulse to blend. Add the oil and pulse a few more times to form a cohesive but still coarse paste.

2. The pesto can be stored, covered, in the refrigerator for up to a week.

OVEN-BRAISED FENNEL

Our Oven-Braised Fennel takes less time and less olive oil than most versions. The finished fennel is soft, with a mellow trademark licorice taste, and no saturated olive oil feeling. We leave the fennel with just a bit of crunch to it.

MAKES 2 CUPS

4 fennel bulbs

¾ cup extra virgin olive oil

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Cut the tops off the fennel bulbs (save the fronds for the Goat Cheese and Fennel Fronds Bruschetta, page 84) and slice off the stem ends. Remove the outer layer and cut each bulb in half from top to bottom. Use two angled cuts to cut the core out of each, and then slice the bulbs across the layers, about ⅛ inch thick. Transfer the sliced bulbs onto a small baking sheet or 9-inch ovenproof skillet. Pour the olive oil over and toss to coat.
3. Bake for 2 hours, stirring every 30 minutes to avoid browning. The fennel should be soft, in shades of white and pale green when finished.
4. Remove from the oven and let cool to room temperature before using. The fennel can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

PANINI

IN ITALY ONE CAN WALK UP TO A COUNTER (OR DRIVE UP to an *auto-grille*), point to a sandwich, and take it cold or ask for it toasted. At 'ino, the panini are always pressed. We would never choose the same ingredients for a cold sandwich that we would for a toasted one. The oils in the meats and cheeses interact differently after some time in a hot press. Heat transforms the sandwich, making it much greater than the sum of its parts. Most of the fillings have strong and savory flavors unto themselves; our goal is to meld them in just the right way.

Our panini are made on ciabatta. We lessen the bulk by slicing off the domed tops of the rolls to use for bread crumbs or croutons, and then slice the remaining rolls in half. This leaves the sandwich with a toasted bread top and toasted crust bottom. The rolls we use are oval shaped and about 7 inches long. The recipes here result in sandwiches that, after pressing, are about 1 inch thick. As bread size varies from baker to baker, adjust the recipes as needed; the bread should be evenly but not thickly covered by the ingredients.

We believe that the quintessential roadside Italian cuisine is worth sitting down for and serving to friends.

GRILLS

When we opened 'ino in 1998, we were in love with an Italian style of eating that we thought was perfectly suited to the American lifestyle. Italian sandwiches, being delicious, stylish, and perfect partners for casual wine drinking, embodied an Italian "simple pleasures" ideal. Made in minutes with a minimum of cooking, panini are perfectly in step with the overscheduled American mind-set. That they can be assembled in a small space has real appeal in everyday home kitchens. These days, panini grills are widely available and while we've made the sandwiches using outdoor grills and frying pans, we love the reliable speed and ease of an at-home panini press.

Our professional restaurant kitchen consists of one hot plate, one toaster oven, and two imported Italian sandwich presses on which we grill our toasted sandwiches, grill the bread for bruschetta, and even cook asparagus. We use the Itagli panini press, which is heavy as an anvil and costs more than most people are willing to shell out for making sandwiches at home. Williams-Sonoma makes a cast-iron electric sandwich grill with a commercial look and feel, but the price tag might make it prohibitive to all but the most moneyed home panini chefs.

For the home kitchen, big or small, grills from Krups and Villaware make excellent panini. Nicely priced, these machines cook up well-toasted sandwiches that are golden brown with those all-important dark grill marks. These grills are hot enough to melt cheese and toast bread but never seem to burn lunch. We give them top scores for performance, ease, and countertop good looks, too.

For those who own no sandwich press or countertop grilling machine, the cast-iron grill pan, in tandem with another heavy pan or foil-wrapped brick, will produce a properly pressed melted-cheese sandwich. Heat the grill pan over a high flame until searing hot before placing the sandwich on it. The foil-wrapped brick acts as the weighted top grill of a panini machine, pressing the sandwich down to a uniform flatness. Flip the sandwich after about three minutes to brown on both sides.

Any of these methods will produce a fine, crunchy, and delicious toasted sandwich. Our top priority both at home and in the restaurant is speed and convenience; panini are fast, handheld foods that you should be able to whip up during a commercial break—and for that good reason, a panini grill occupies prime real estate on our home kitchen counter, ready to go at a moment's notice.

Panini Grill

EGG, SWEET ONION, AND CACIO PANINI

This egg panino is perfect for breakfast, yet it's hearty enough to satisfy throughout the day. Gently scramble the eggs so that the heat of the panini grill doesn't toughen them.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

1 tablespoon olive oil

6 large eggs, lightly beaten

¼ teaspoon salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 cup Sweet Onions (page 20)

4 ounces Cacio di Roma or Pecorino Romano, thinly sliced by hand

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and reserve for another use. The rolls should be about 1 inch thick with a crusty bottom and exposed bread top. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Over a medium flame, heat the olive oil in a medium nonstick skillet. Add the eggs, salt, and pepper. Use a rubber spatula to move the eggs, starting at the edge of the pan and moving toward the center until the eggs are softly scrambled.
4. Spread each half of the ciabatta rolls with a thin layer of Sweet Onions.
5. Divide the scrambled eggs among the 4 bottom halves of the ciabatta. Top with the sliced Cacio and top with the remaining ciabatta halves.
6. Grill the panini for 3 minutes until the cheese sets and the bread is golden. Serve immediately.

PROSCIUTTO, BEL PAESE, AND SWEET ONION PANINI

Bel Paese ("beautiful country") is the charming cheese of Italian kids' lunch boxes. This ham and cheese sandwich is a comforting childhood favorite.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

8 slices prosciutto di Parma

¾ cup Sweet Onions (page 20)

4 ounces Bel Paese, thinly sliced

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and reserve for another use. The rolls should be about 1 inch thick with a crusty bottom and exposed bread top. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Layer 2 slices of prosciutto on the bottom of each ciabatta, followed by 3 tablespoons of Sweet Onions. Lay the Bel Paese slices over, covering the sandwich entirely before closing up with the thin top of the ciabatta.
4. Grill each sandwich for about 5 minutes until the bread is golden brown and the cheese has gently melted. Cut each sandwich in half and serve immediately.

THREE CHEESE PANINI

A grilled cheese to the third power, this sandwich blends the flavors of Grana, Crotonese, and Cacio, with a drizzle of truffled olive oil to dress things up. It's a simple, straightforward cheese experience. Slice the cheeses by hand, thinly but haphazardly, creating a complete layer of each type.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

2 ounces Grana Padano or Parmigiano-Reggiano, thinly sliced

2 ounces Crotonese, thinly sliced

2 ounces Cacio di Roma or Pecorino Romano, thinly sliced

Truffle oil

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and save for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Spread a thin, even layer of Grana, followed by the Crotonese, and then the Cacio over the bottom of each roll. Generously drizzle some truffle oil over each before closing up the sandwich.
4. Grill each sandwich for about 3 minutes until the bread is golden brown and the cheese melted.

SWEET COPPA AND HOT PEPPER PANINI

This is a simple assemblage of clear, bright flavors. The heat of the panini grill releases the oils in the meat, transforming the sandwich in a different way than if it involved cheese. This is a true representation of Italian roadside cuisine. For this sandwich we use jarred whole cherry peppers.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

8 ounces sweet coppa, sliced

6 hot cherry peppers, stems removed, cut into strips and seeds discarded

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and save for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Spread an even layer of sweet coppa over the bottom halves of the rolls. Follow with a thin, even distribution of hot peppers. Cover with the top halves of the ciabatta.
4. Grill each sandwich for 4 minutes. The bread should be golden brown and the sandwich heated through.

MOZZARELLA, BASIL PESTO, AND PEPERONATA PANINI

Like a pizza Margherita, this red, white, and green sandwich could be the official state snack of Italy. Folks in our town love it for its familiar flavors and easy, satisfying style.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

¾ cup Basil Pesto (page 14)

1 cup Peperonata (page 23)

6 ounces fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed top of the ciabatta rolls and reserve for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Spread the top halves of the rolls with Basil Pesto, covering them completely. Spread the bottom halves of the rolls with a thin layer of Peperonata. Lay the sliced mozzarella over the Peperonata in a single layer. Season with salt and pepper before covering the panini with the top halves of the ciabatta.
4. Grill the sandwiches for 4 minutes until the bread is golden brown and the cheese has set. Cut each in half and serve immediately.

PORTOBELLO AND GRANA PANINI

The raw portobello slices steam under the heat of the panini grill, and their moisture evaporates into the bread. It's a completely different mouth feel than using sautéed mushrooms, which can be limp and greasy in sandwiches. The sum of these flavors is akin to pizza, which could account for this sandwich's devoted following.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

½ cup Sun-dried Tomato Pesto (page 16)

2 medium portobello mushrooms

Extra virgin olive oil

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

4 ounces Grana Padano, grated using the large holes of a box grater

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and reserve for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Spread the Sun-dried Tomato Pesto thinly but completely over the bottom halves of the ciabatta rolls.
4. Remove the stems from the mushrooms, discard, and clean the caps by rubbing them gently with a paper towel. Cut each mushroom cap into slices about ⅛ inch thick.
5. Lay mushroom slices across the bottom half of the rolls from end to end using 3 or 4 slices for each panino (don't overlap). Drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper.
6. Top each sandwich with a thin layer of Grana before covering each with the top halves of the rolls.
7. Grill for 3 minutes until the bread is golden brown and the cheese has set.

CACCIATORINI, GOAT CHEESE, AND BLACK OLIVE PESTO PANINI

This earthy panino has a big, bold flavor. With warm cacciatorini and Black Olive Pesto cutting through the creamy goat cheese, this excellent combination remains at the top of our list.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

½ cup Black Olive Pesto (page 28)

8 ounces cacciatorini, thinly sliced

6 ounces fresh goat cheese

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and save for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Spread an even layer of Black Olive Pesto over the bottom halves of the rolls, letting the oils soak into the bread. Follow with the cacciatorini, in a double thickness from end to end. Use a butter knife to spread the goat cheese over the top halves of the rolls, and then sprinkle with salt and pepper.
4. Cover each bottom half with a goat cheese–covered top half of a roll. Grill for 4 minutes until the goat cheese looks creamy and the panini are warmed through. Cut in half and serve immediately.

ITALIAN TUNA, OVEN-ROASTED TOMATO, AND ARUGULA PANINI

Warm tuna sandwiches are usually tuna melts. In our version there's no cheese to mute the flavors, so the fresh lemony taste of Italian tuna shines through. Make the tuna mixture ahead of time to let the flavors get to know each other.

MAKES 4 PANINI

8 ounces canned Italian tuna, packed in oil

6 caperberries, stems removed, thinly sliced

Juice of 1 lemon

¼ teaspoon red chile flakes

2 tablespoons Black Olive Pesto (page 28)

4 ciabatta rolls

1 cup Oven-Roasted Tomatoes (page 24) (about 12 slices)

2 cups baby arugula, roughly chopped

Extra virgin olive oil

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Combine the tuna, caperberries, lemon juice, red chile flakes, and Black Olive Pesto in a medium mixing bowl. Use a fork to flake the tuna and thoroughly incorporate the ingredients. Chill until ready to use.

2. Preheat a panini grill.

3. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and save for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.

4. Spread a thin layer of the tuna mixture over the bottom halves of the rolls. Follow with Oven-Roasted Tomatoes, about 3 slices per sandwich. Sprinkle a fistful of chopped arugula over each panino and then drizzle with olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

5. Grill each sandwich for about 3 minutes until the bread is a light golden brown and the filling is warm.

Panini Grill

PROSCIUTTO COTTO, MOZZARELLA, AND HOT MUSTARD PANINI

Hot Mustard adds a kick to this straightforward panino of cooked Italian ham and creamy fresh mozzarella. If you don't have time to make the mustard, use a smooth, spicy hot pub mustard.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

¼ cup Hot Mustard (page 21) or other spicy mustard

12 slices prosciutto cotto

1 cup baby arugula leaves

8 ounces fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced

1. Preheat panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and save for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Coat the tops and bottoms of the ciabatta with a slick of Hot Mustard.
4. Use 3 slices of the prosciutto cotto to cover the bottom halves of the ciabatta rolls. Follow with a spread of arugula leaves and top with the sliced mozzarella, covering the sandwich from end to end with a thin, even layer of cheese.
5. Grill the sandwiches for 3 minutes until the bread is crisp and toasted, and the cheese is warmed and slightly melted.

THE AMERICANO

A tasty combination of grilled chicken, tomatoes, and cheese, this hearty sandwich is always a hit. Grill the chicken breasts ahead of time for last-minute convenience.

MAKES 4 PANINI

2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 1 pound)

2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

4 ciabatta rolls

16 slices Oven-Roasted Tomatoes (page 24)

1 cup baby arugula leaves, roughly chopped into ½-inch strips

½ lemon

4 ounces Asiago, grated using the large holes of a box grater

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Wash and pat dry the chicken breasts. Place the chicken breasts on a foil-lined baking tray. Rub each with a teaspoon of olive oil and season with salt and pepper, and bake for 12 to 15 minutes until the breasts are opaque and firm to the touch.
3. Slicing across the breast, cut the chicken into ⅛-inch slices.
4. Preheat a panini grill.
5. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and reserve for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.
6. Cover the bottom halves of the ciabatta with an even layer of the sliced chicken. Follow with a layer of Oven-Roasted Tomatoes. Season with salt and pepper before adding the chopped arugula. Give each a squeeze of lemon juice and then top with a layer of grated Asiago. Cover the sandwiches with the tops of the ciabatta and place, two at a time, in the preheated grill. They are done when you can smell the cheese, about 3 minutes.

PROSCIUTTO, MOZZARELLA, AND TOMATO PANINI

These ingredients are as emblematic of Italy as spaghetti itself. We use fresh tomatoes when they're ripe and fragrant, Oven-Roasted Tomatoes (see page 24) when they're not. Serve this panino with a little Peperonata alongside for color and a little jolt of acidic heat.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

Extra virgin olive oil

12 slices prosciutto di Parma

3 medium tomatoes, sliced ¼ inch thick

8 ounces fresh mozzarella, sliced as thinly as possible (⅛ to ¼ inch thick)

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Peperonata (page 23), optional

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and reserve for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Drizzle a trail of olive oil over the bottom half of each roll. Follow with 3 slices of prosciutto per sandwich. Top each sandwich with about 3 tomato slices. Finish with the mozzarella, using about 2 slices per sandwich to achieve a thin, even layer. Season with salt and pepper and cover with the top halves of the ciabatta.
4. Grill the sandwiches for about 3 minutes until the bread is lightly toasted and the cheese has just begun to melt. Cut each in half and serve with a tablespoon or two of Peperonata, if you want, on each plate.

SUN-DRIED TOMATO PESTO, RED ONION, AND FONTINA PANINI

This panino puts a couple of made-ahead condimentos to their best use. Take the ingredients out of the fridge and these big, bold sandwiches are ready in no time.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

1 cup Sun-dried Tomato Pesto (page 16)

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

½ cup Pickled Onions (page 22)

2 cups baby arugula, roughly chopped

8 ounces Italian Fontina, sliced

Extra virgin olive oil

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and discard. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Spread the bottom halves of the rolls with Sun-dried Tomato Pesto, about 3 tablespoons each, letting it soak into the bread. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Squeeze the excess liquid from the Pickled Onions and divide among the 4 sandwiches. Follow with a fistful (approximately ½ cup) of chopped arugula, then cover with a layer of Fontina. Finish with a light drizzle of olive oil before covering with the top halves of the rolls.
5. Grill the sandwiches for about 4 minutes until the bread is golden brown and the aroma of the cheese is apparent. Cut the sandwiches in half and serve hot from the grill.

SOPPRESSATA, FONTINA, AND ARUGULA PANINI

While grilled panini are simple, almost freeform sandwiches, there are a few little rules that, when adhered to, make for a superior result. First and foremost is cheese on top: When making grilled panini that contain cheese, the cheese should always go on last, before closing things up. This way, when the panino goes into a sandwich press, the flavor of the cheese flows down onto the other ingredients.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

15 thin slices soppressata or other hard salami

1 small bunch arugula, well rinsed and dried

Freshly ground black pepper

8 thin slices Italian Fontina

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and reserve for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls in half horizontally.
3. Distribute the soppressata slices so that the bottom halves of the rolls are covered with a single layer of salami. Top with a few leaves of arugula and some black pepper. Arrange 2 slices of Fontina on each sandwich and trim the edges to fit the bread. Cover with the top halves of the rolls.
4. Grill the sandwiches until warmed through completely, about 4 minutes. Cut in half and serve immediately.

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ARTICHOKE, FENNEL, AND FONTINA PANINI

This is the richest of the all-veggie panini, thanks to the Fontina. The slight crunch of the Oven-Braised Fennel against the silky marinated artichoke makes these even more memorable. Marinated artichoke hearts are our kind of convenience food. We always keep a jar in the fridge.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

2 cups sliced artichoke hearts

1 cup Oven-Braised Fennel (page 29)

8 ounces Italian Fontina, thinly sliced

Extra virgin olive oil

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and reserve for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Spread a thick layer of artichoke hearts over the bottom halves of the ciabatta. Follow with about 3 tablespoons of Oven-Braised Fennel spread over each. Top with an even, thin layer of Fontina. Finish with a drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Cover with the top halves of the ciabatta rolls.
4. Grill the sandwiches for 4 minutes until the bread is golden brown, the cheese has set, and the ingredients are warm throughout.

BRESAOLA, ASPARAGUS, AND PECORINO PEPATO PANINI

While panini making is generally a laid-back affair, this particular sandwich requires vigilance at the grill. Bresaola can easily go from luxuriously lean to dry and tough if it spends too much time on the grill. The goal is to grill the sandwiches just long enough to melt the cheese over the already grilled asparagus.

MAKES 4 PANINI

6 thin asparagus spears, woody stems removed

4 ciabatta rolls

Extra virgin olive oil

8 slices bresaola

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

4 ounces Pecorino Pepato, thinly sliced by hand

1. Preheat a panini grill. Grill the asparagus spears for 2 minutes until they are roasted but still crunchy. Transfer to a cutting board and thinly slice on a diagonal. Set aside.

2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and reserve for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally. Drizzle olive oil over the top and bottom halves.

3. Cover the bottom halves of the rolls with 2 slices of bresaola per sandwich. Season the bresaola with salt and pepper. Sprinkle the sliced asparagus over the bresaola in a thin, even layer, topped by the slices of Pecorino Pepato. Cover with the top halves of the rolls.

4. Grill the sandwiches for 3 minutes to lightly grill the bread and warm the interior.

MORTADELLA, GOAT CHEESE, AND ACETO BALSAMICO PANINI

The Aceto Balsamico transforms these panini into something spectacular. Remember, whenever you are using expensive oils or aged vinegars they will have the biggest impact if added just before serving, as heat can diminish the vibrancy of their complex flavors.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

6 ounces mortadella, thinly sliced

8 ounces fresh goat cheese

Extra virgin olive oil

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Aceto Balsamico (aged balsamic vinegar)

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of each ciabatta roll and save for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Use 3 slices of mortadella to cover the bottom halves of each ciabatta roll (fold the mortadella in half so none hangs over the side of the roll). Use a butter knife to spread about 2 tablespoons of goat cheese over the top halves of the ciabatta. Drizzle olive oil over the goat cheese, season with salt and pepper, and then close up the sandwiches. Grill for 3 minutes until the bread is golden brown and the ingredients are warm throughout.
4. To serve cut the panini in half and drizzle a few drops of Aceto Balsamico over each.

SWEET COPPA, MOZZARELLA, AND PICKLED RED ONION PANINI

We like to keep the number of sandwich ingredients to three or under for the sake of simplicity. These three ingredients complement each other in both taste and texture. Remember to carefully trim the ciabatta rolls down to a more slim silhouette for the right balance of bread to filling.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

8 ounces sweet coppa, thinly sliced

½ cup Pickled Onions (page 22)

4 ounces fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced by hand

Extra virgin olive oil

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and save them for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Spread a thin, even layer of sweet coppa over the bottom halves of the rolls. Squeeze the excess moisture from the Pickled Onions and spread over the sweet coppa. Follow with a layer of mozzarella, covering the bread from end to end with no overhang. Finish with a small drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkling of salt and pepper.
4. Grill the sandwiches for 3 to 4 minutes until the bread is golden and the cheese has set. Cut each sandwich in half and serve immediately.

PECORINO PEPATO AND ARUGULA PANINI

Tender but not exactly delicate, arugula has a pronounced personality that can stand up to big flavors and the heat of a grill. Its trademark peppery taste and green good looks make arugula one of our favorite greens for both sandwiches and salads. Go for the small, baby leaves that haven't been prewashed. Remove dirt and sand by submerging the arugula in two changes of water and spinning dry.

MAKES 4 PANINI

4 ciabatta rolls

8 ounces Pecorino Pepato, thinly sliced by hand

2 cups baby arugula, roughly chopped

Extra virgin olive oil

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Slice off the domed tops of the ciabatta rolls and reserve for another use. The rolls should now be about 1 inch thick. Split the rolls horizontally.
3. Divide the Pecorino Pepato among the bottom halves of the ciabatta. Follow with a generous covering of chopped arugula. Finish with a drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Cover with the top halves of the ciabatta.
4. Grill the sandwiches for 4 minutes until the cheese is melted. Cut in half and serve immediately.

NUTELLA PANINI

Nutella, a chocolate hazelnut spread, makes these the panini that kids love best. Since they're as simple as a peanut butter sandwich to prepare, our son Jack helps us make them for his friends. This traditional Italian snack is as compelling for grown-ups as it for their kids.

FOR EACH PANINI

3 tablespoons Nutella

2 slices white sandwich bread

1. Preheat a panini grill.
2. Spread the Nutella across each piece of bread, from edge to edge. Close up the sandwich and trim the crusts.
3. Grill each sandwich for 3 minutes until the bread is lightly browned. Remove the crusts and cut each into 4 triangles before serving.

BRUSCHETTA

BRUSCHETTA ARE RUSTIC TOASTS TOPPED WITH SAVORY INGREDI-ents. As simple as something delicious spooned over a fragrant piece of toast, a few bruschetta can make a light meal or act as an appetizer before one.

Traditional Italian bruschetta is yesterday's bread grilled over a fire, rubbed with a clove of garlic, and then drizzled with extra virgin olive oil. At 'ino, we toast the bread on our panini grill; sometimes we skip the garlic, but we almost always stick to tradition when it comes to olive oil. In other words, bread is a starting point—at 'ino, where we rely on our signature combinations, and in our home kitchen, where the contents of the fridge determines what goes on top.

Long loaves of Italian bread or French baguette are what we like best for bruschetta. For uniform slicing, we use the width of our serrated knife as the gauge for how thick to slice the bread, about three-quarters of an inch thick. Toasting the bread on the panini grill will compress the bread slightly, crisping the exterior while leaving the inside moist and chewy.

The components of bruschetta are made ahead and assembled just before serving. The best bruschetta platters are colorful and varied, garnished simply with olive oil and freshly ground black pepper. Bruschetta can lead into dinner, but don't always have to—with a glass of wine in one hand and a rustic bruschetta in the other, things might be just perfect the way they are.

If the bruschetta might spend some time on a platter before being eaten, toast the bread to a darker brown to guard against sogginess.

THE CROSTINI CONNECTION

The difference between bruschetta and crostini is almost atmospheric: Think of warm, tender bruschetta for intimate groups and crunchy crostini for big, raucous parties. Crostini, with their firmer texture and just-one-bite size, can be thought of as a canapé, great for passing at parties. For crostini, use 1-inch slices from large, round peasant loaves, such as miche, and then toast them to a firm, golden brown crunch. Prepare as you would baguette slices and then use a serrated knife to cut each crostini into bite-sized pieces.

SCRAMBLED EGG, PANCETTA, AND FONTINA BRUSCHETTA

Besides being clear favorites for brunch, these toasts, topped with bacon and eggs, are a filling afternoon snack. Pair them with a hearty salad for a quick dinner. We melt the Fontina using a countertop toaster oven set to the toast function. If you don't have a toaster oven, use your broiler.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

8 ounces pancetta, cut into a ½-inch dice

8 baguette slices, ¾-inch thick, cut on the diagonal

1 tablespoon olive oil

8 large eggs, lightly beaten

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

4 ounces Italian Fontina, thinly sliced by hand

1. In a small skillet, brown the pancetta over a medium flame, 5 to 7 minutes. Spoon out excess rendered fat as you go. When the pancetta is cooked, transfer to a paper towel–lined plate and set aside. (While you might be inclined to cook the eggs in the rendered fat, it makes for a greasy bruschetta.) Wipe the pan clean with a paper towel. Set aside.

2. While the pancetta is cooking, lightly toast the baguette slices, either on a preheated panini grill for 1 to 2 minutes or in a toaster oven. The bread should be a crisp light brown. Transfer the toasted slices to a baking sheet or toaster-oven pan.

3. Heat the olive oil in a medium nonstick skillet. Add the eggs, salt, pepper, and browned pancetta. Use a rubber spatula to move the eggs, starting at the edge of the pan and moving toward the center, lightly cooking the eggs as well as incorporating the pancetta. The eggs should be softly scrambled.

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4. Divide the eggs among the 8 baguette slices. Cut the Fontina into rectangles that will fit neatly over each. Toast in the toaster oven or broil until the cheese bubbles and melts. Serve immediately.

VARIATION

We offer this same dish made with grilled asparagus instead of pancetta to our nonmeat–eating friends. Substitute 4 grilled asparagus spears cut into ½-inch pieces for the pancetta.

BASIL PESTO BRUSCHETTA

Maybe it's the vivid green color or the utterly enticing aroma, but this is one of the most satisfying bruschetta ever.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

8 baguette slices, ½ inch thick, cut on the diagonal

1 cup Basil Pesto (page 14)

1. Toast the baguette slices, on a preheated panini grill for 1 to 2 minutes or in a toaster oven. The bread should be crisp and lightly browned.

2. Spoon about 1½ tablespoons of the pesto evenly over the toasted bread and serve immediately on a platter or cutting board.

CAPONATA AND GOAT CHEESE BRUSCHETTA

This bruschetta pairs caponata, our favorite way to prepare eggplant, with cool, creamy goat cheese. Be sure to use fresh goat cheese for the best-looking and tasting results. Refrigerate the caponata for up to 5 days.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

3 eggplants (about 10 ounces each)

20 caperberries, stems removed, thinly sliced

¼ cup pine nuts

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper plus more for topping

¼ teaspoon red chile flakes

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

¼ cup balsamic vinegar

2 tablespoons honey

2 tomatoes, about 4 ounces each, cored and diced

8 baguette slices, about ½ inch thick

4 ounces fresh goat cheese

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F.
2. Cut off and discard both ends of the eggplants. To dice, stand an eggplant on a cutting board and cut from top to bottom, making long, ¾-inch thick slices. Stack the slices and then cut lengthwise and across the slices in the same thickness. Transfer the chunks to a baking sheet.
3. Spread the sliced caperberries over the eggplant and then the pine nuts. Sprinkle with the salt, black pepper, and chile flakes.
4. Combine the olive oil, vinegar, and honey in a small bowl, whisk to combine, and pour over the pile of ingredients. Transfer to the oven and cook for 40 minutes, tossing about every 10 minutes or so.
5. Add the tomatoes to the pan, toss to combine, and then continue cooking for 10 minutes more. The eggplant should be soft, shrunken, and yielding when the caponata is done.
6. Toast the baguette slices on a panini grill or in a toaster oven for 1 to 2 minutes until they are crisp and lightly browned.
7. Spread about 2 tablespoons of the caponata over each toasted baguette slice and spread to completely cover the toast. Top each with a crumble of goat cheese and freshly ground black pepper. Serve immediately.

APERITIVO

A sort of season opener for an evening out, an aperitivo should whet your appetite for things to come. We keep big glass containers of fruit and vermouth on hand all year round. The fruit changes with the seasons, but summer is when people love it best.

SERVES 6 TO 8

2 cups of fruit, such as:

Berries (any type, well rinsed, and air-dried)

Black plums, cut into segments

Apples, cut into chunks

Pears, diced

Clementines, peeled and segmented

Pineapple, fresh, cut into 2-inch chunks

Mango, sliced

Kiwi

Lemon slices and fresh mint

1 bottle (750 ml) white vermouth

2 bottles crisp white wine, such as Frascati or Sauvignon Blanc

1. Combine the fruit with the vermouth in any wide-mouthed glass jar that has a lid. Cover and let stand at room temperature for at least 12 hours if using softer fruits, or 24 hours if using firm fall fruits. The fruit-vermouth mixture can be stored for up to a week.

2. To serve, fill a tall glass with ice and then fill two-thirds full with cold white wine. Holding the fruit back with the jar's lid, pour the fruit-flavored vermouth and fill to the top of the glass. Garnish with a few pieces of the macerated fruit.

ANCHOVY AND ARUGULA BRUSCHETTA

Anchovies aren't seasonal, but we think this bruschetta tastes best in summer. Buy marinated white anchovies at the fish counter, rather than the tinned variety for their cool, fresh taste and texture.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

8 baguette slices, ¾ inch thick, cut on the diagonal

1 cup baby arugula leaves

½ pound marinated white Italian anchovies

1 lemon, cut in half

Extra virgin olive oil

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Toast the baguette slices, on a preheated panini grill for 1 to 2 minutes or in a toaster oven until they are lightly browned.

2. Top each toast with a few arugula leaves. Lay 2 anchovies over each, skin side up. Dress each with a squeeze of lemon juice, a drizzle of olive oil, a sprinkling of salt, and a few turns of a pepper mill. Serve immediately.

PEPERONATA AND CROTONESE BRUSCHETTA

Roasted red peppers make this a particularly vibrant addition to a platter of bruschetta. One of the stronger-flavored Pecorino Romanos, Crotonese is a hard sheep's milk cheese made in and around Calabria.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

4 red bell peppers, cored, seeded, and cut into a 1-inch dice

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

2 teaspoons dried thyme

Pinch of red chile flakes

Salt

8 baguette slices, ¾ inch thick, cut on the diagonal

4 ounces Crotonese, grated using the large holes of a box grater

1. Preheat the toaster oven to 350°F.

2. Combine the bell peppers, olive oil, balsamic vinegar, thyme, and chile flakes in a bowl, and toss to completely coat the diced peppers. Pour onto a toaster-oven tray and bake for 25 minutes, stirring with a spatula every 5 minutes or so, until the peppers are soft and yielding. Transfer to a bowl (be sure to pour all of the olive oil/vinegar mixture in as well) and cool to room temperature. Use the same day or refrigerate overnight.

3. Just before serving, toast the baguette slices on a preheated panini grill for 1 to 2 minutes or in a toaster oven until they are lightly browned.

4. Stir the bell pepper mixture and spoon over the toasted bread, creating an even layer from crust to crust. Follow with a generous sprinkling of the grated Crotonese and arrange on a platter to serve.

ASPARAGUS, TRUFFLE OIL, AND PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO BRUSCHETTA

This vibrant, aromatic bruschetta makes us think of a warm spring afternoon, when cutting out of work early is irresistible. Equally irresistible is pairing this bruschetta with a glass of crisp white wine, such as a Tocai.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

8 baguette slices, ½ inch thick, cut on the diagonal

8 thin asparagus spears, woody stems removed

4 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano, grated on the large holes of a box grater

Truffle oil

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Toast the bread slices for 1 to 2 minutes on a preheated panini grill or in a toaster oven until they are a crisp light brown. Transfer to a serving platter or 4 individual plates.

2. Grill the asparagus spears for 2 minutes until they appear roasted but are still crunchy. Transfer to a cutting board and cut into ½-inch pieces on the diagonal. Spoon the asparagus chunks evenly over each of the 8 baguette toasts. Top each with the grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, a drizzle of truffle oil, and a few turns of a pepper mill. Serve immediately.

SWEET ONION AND CACIO BRUSCHETTA

Sweet Onions sandwiched between crunchy bread and salty sheep's milk cheese make this bruschetta highly addictive. It is well suited to being made ahead because the ingredients don't suffer from sitting for a while. As always, if the bruschetta might spend some time on a platter before being eaten, toast the bread to a darker brown to guard against sogginess.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

1½ cups Sweet Onions (page 20)

4 ounces Cacio di Roma or Pecorino Romano, grated using the large holes of a box grater

8 baguette slices, ¾ inch thick, cut on the diagonal

1. Bring the Sweet Onions and cheese to room temperature if necessary.
2. Toast the baguette slices on a preheated panini grill for 1 to 2 minutes or in a toaster oven until they are lightly browned.
3. Spoon and spread approximately 3 tablespoons of the onions over the toasts. The onions should be about as thick as the bread slice.
4. Top each toast with 2 tablespoons of the grated Cacio and serve.

ROASTED GARLIC AND ARUGULA OIL BRUSCHETTA

This bruschetta is garlic bread for serious garlic lovers: whole roasted cloves are topped with a bright green streak of peppery arugula oil. Some feel that mints should be kept at the ready. We think there's nothing better than garlic breath.

There will be leftover arugula oil; use the extra over sandwiches, or spooned over a Potato and Watercress Frittata (page 118).

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

4 cups baby arugula leaves

¾ cup extra virgin olive oil

½ teaspoon salt

8 baguette slices, ½ inch thick, cut on the diagonal

1 cup Balsamic Roasted Garlic (page 19)

1. Combine the arugula, olive oil, and salt in a blender and puree to a smooth, vivid green. Store, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

2. Toast the baguette slices on a preheated panini grill for 1 to 2 minutes or in a toaster oven until they are lightly browned.

3. Top each toast with a few cloves of Balsamic Roasted Garlic. Spoon a trail of arugula oil over each and serve immediately.

RICOTTA FRESCA AND OVEN-ROASTED TOMATO BRUSCHETTA

Fresh ricotta is cool and soothing with a mild flavor and texture. This bruschetta is great for entertaining.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

8 baguette slices, about ½ inch thick, cut on the diagonal

1 cup ricotta fresca

Oven-Roasted Tomatoes (page 24)

Freshly ground black pepper

Salt

1. Toast the baguette slices on a preheated panini grill for 1 to 2 minutes or in a toaster oven until they are lightly browned.

2. Spread about 2 tablespoons of the ricotta fresca over each toast and spread evenly, from crust to crust. The ricotta should be almost as thick as the bread slice.

3. Garnish each bruschetta with a slice or two of Oven-Roasted Tomatoes. Top each with a few turns of a pepper mill and a dash of salt. Serve immediately.

TALEGGIO AND SUN-DRIED TOMATO BRUSCHETTA

We love the contrast of tangy sun-dried tomatoes against the cool creaminess of Taleggio, one of our favorite cheeses.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

8 baguette slices, about ½ inch thick, cut on the diagonal

8 rectangular slices Taleggio, 2 × 1 inch, about ½ inch thick

¼ cup Sun-dried Tomato Pesto (page 16)

1. Toast the baguette slices on a preheated panini grill for 1 to 2 minutes or in a toaster oven until crisp and lightly browned.
2. Lay the Taleggio pieces on the baguette slices while they are still hot from the panini grill.
3. Spoon a trail of Sun-dried Tomato Pesto over the length of each bruschetta and serve them immediately.

OVEN-BRAISED FENNEL AND BLACK OLIVE PESTO BRUSCHETTA

Fennel and olives is a classic Mediterranean pairing. We use these two flavorful ingredients in this simple bruschetta. Prepare the components ahead of time and assemble the bruschetta just before eating.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

8 baguette slices, ¾ inch thick, cut on the diagonal

2 cups Oven-Braised Fennel (page 000), warm or at room temperature

½ cup Black Olive Pesto (page 000)

1. Toast the baguette slices on a panini preheated grill for 1 to 2 minutes or in a toaster oven until crisp and lightly browned.
2. Spread a few tablespoons of Oven-Braised Fennel over each baguette slice, covering each slice entirely.
3. Spoon a trail of Black Olive Pesto over each bruschetta and serve immediately.

AntiPasti
Bruschet
Chees
PANINI

ROASTED BUTTERNUT SQUASH, WALNUT, AND ASIAGO BRUSCHETTA

Sweet butternut squash pairs wonderfully with Asiago, a mild, sweet cow's milk cheese. We finish it with a drizzle of walnut oil to reinforce the creamy crunch of the walnuts you'll find within. This is the perfect fall bruschetta in a beautiful shade of autumnal orange.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

4 cups diced butternut squash (one 3-pound squash)

¼ cup sliced caperberries, stems removed

⅓ cup roughly chopped walnuts

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1 teaspoon honey

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon red chile flakes

8 baguette slices, ¾-inch thick, cut on the diagonal

Walnut oil

4 ounces Asiago, grated using the large holes of a box grater

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. In a medium bowl, toss the butternut squash, caperberries, walnuts, olive oil, balsamic vinegar, honey, salt, and chile flakes. Spread on a small baking sheet and bake for 30 minutes, mixing about every 10 minutes.
3. Raise the oven temperature to 500°F and cook for 10 minutes more. The butternut squash should be soft, yielding, and slightly brown. Remove from the oven and cool to room temperature.
4. Preheat a panini grill. Grill the bread slices for 2 to 3 minutes until they are golden brown. Transfer to a serving platter.
5. Spoon 2 tablespoons of the butternut squash onto the prepared toasts. Top with a quick drizzle of walnut oil and a sprinkling of grated Asiago just before serving.

FIG, PROSCIUTTO, AND ARUGULA BRUSCHETTA

Think of this as the Rolls-Royce of bruschetta. Look for figs with thin skin, full flesh, and a sweet smell. This is a time to use your very best aged balsamic vinegar.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

8 baguette slices, ¾ inch thick, cut on the diagonal

4 slices prosciutto di Parma or San Daniele

½ cup baby arugula leaves

4 figs, stem ends removed, each cut into 4 slices

Extra virgin olive oil

Aceto Balsamico (aged balsamic vinegar)

1. Toast the baguette slices on a preheated panini grill for 1 to 2 minutes or in a toaster oven until they are crisp and light brown.
2. Cut the prosciutto slices in half and place on the toasted breads (fold the prosciutto in half so that it fits neatly on top). Top each slice with 2 arugula leaves and 3 fig slices.
3. Drizzle with olive oil and the Aceto Balsamico. Serve immediately.

PANINI $8

prosciutto, bel paese and sweet onion

three cheese – crotonese, cacio, grana

sweet coppa, hot peppers and rucola

portobello, grana and sun-dried tomato

mozzarella, basil pesto and pepperonat

cacciatorini, goat cheese and black oli

chicken, oven-roasted tomato, asiago

roasted vegetables and goat cheese

prosciutto, mozzarella and tomato

soppressata, fontina and rucola

rucola, sun-dried tomato pesto, red o

artichoke, fennel and fontina

bresaola, asparagus and pecorino p

mortadella with goat cheese and a

tuna with oven-roasted tomato an

pecorino peppato and rucola

sweet coppa, mozzarella and red

1/2 panino with mixed green salo

quattro panini $10

extra side orders (i.e. basil pesto, etc

WALNUT PESTO AND ARUGULA BRUSCHETTA

Sun-dried tomatoes add sweetness to this walnut pesto. It will keep for five days in the fridge, so make extra and use the leftovers to serve to drop-in guests or to add into salads or soups. Could you stir a few tablespoons into cooked pasta? Absolutely.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

1 cup walnuts

¾ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

¾ cup sun-dried tomatoes

1½ cups extra virgin olive oil

8 baguette slices, ¾ inch thick, cut on the diagonal

½ cup baby arugula leaves

1. In a food processor, combine the walnuts, Parmigiano-Reggiano, butter, sun-dried tomatoes, and ¾ cup of the olive oil. Pulse until the sun-dried tomatoes are pureed. Add the remaining oil and process until smooth, about 15 seconds. Transfer to a bowl with a resealable lid and refrigerate until ready to use (there should be at least ½ inch of olive oil that sits on top of the pesto. If this isn't the case, add more olive oil if necessary). Bring to room temperature and stir thoroughly before serving.

2. Toast the baguette slices on a preheated panini grill for 1 to 2 minutes or in a toaster oven until crisp and lightly browned.

3. Spoon about 2 tablespoons of pesto over each baguette slice so that the bread is covered, crust to crust, with a thin slick of pesto. Top with 2 or 3 leaves of arugula and serve immediately.

GOAT CHEESE AND FENNEL FRONDS BRUSCHETTA

Two simple ingredients come together to form a bruschetta that is both rustic and elegant. Fennel fronds possess the wonderful flavor of anise but in a more gentle, dill-like feathery way. Use the leftover fennel bulbs to make Oven-Braised Fennel (page 29) or Artichoke, Fennel, and Fontina Panini (page 51). The simplest of starters, this is also one of the easiest ways to feed drop-in guests. Use a creamy, fresh goat cheese for a smooth, moist blend.

BUYING FENNEL: More and more, fennel is sold topless. Fennel bulbs sold without their feathery fronds are more likely to be older than bulbs sold with their tops on. As with beet greens or the leafy tops of carrots, the fronds are the first part of the fennel to show age, so many supermarkets do away with them, thus improving their display capabilities while increasing the shelf time of the vegetables. Seek out a store that leaves the fennel intact: Full, green fronds still attached to their bulbs represent a well-handled and fresher fennel. Cut or pull the green fronds away from the stalk as you would remove leafy herbs from their stems.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

8 ounces fresh goat cheese

½ cup fennel fronds (from 1 large fennel bulb), finely minced

8 baguette slices, ¾ inch thick, cut on the diagonal

Extra virgin olive oil

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. In a medium bowl, combine the goat cheese and fennel fronds. Use a fork to combine thoroughly (the goat cheese should be heavily laced with fennel fronds, giving it a fresh green look). The goat cheese can be used immediately or covered and refrigerated for up to 3 days.

2. Toast the baguette slices on a preheated panini grill for 1 to 2 minutes or in a toaster oven until they are crisp and light brown.

3. Cover each toasted baguette slice with 2 tablespoons of the goat cheese mixture. Use a knife to spread it evenly from crust to crust. Top with a drizzle of olive oil, a sprinkling of salt, and a few turns of a pepper mill.

TRAMEZZINI

A FEW GREAT INGREDIENTS BETWEEN SLICES OF MOIST, FRESH white bread make wonderfully simple sandwiches. Tramezzini rely not on a toasted, rustic texture, but on a straightforward freshness, both in flavor and feel.

The word *tramezzini*, which translates roughly to "little something in the middle," came into use when Mussolini banned all use of English, making the word *sandwich* illegal. While tramezzini take the form made famous by the Earl of Sandwich, they have a flair that's undeniably Italian.

Like tea sandwiches, tramezzini are crustless, petite, and downright polite. As a partner to a late morning cappuccino, tramezzini help pave the way to lunch, acting as savory and fast snacks. Their small size is a big part of the draw—one isn't too much of a commitment of either appetite or time. When you're lucky enough to have an afternoon stretching out luxuriously ahead of you, put a few tramezzini on a plate and enjoy them with a glass or two of Prosecco.

ITALIAN TUNA AND BLACK OLIVE PESTO TRAMEZZINI

Cooked and then packed in olive oil, ventresca (the big fatty belly of albacore tuna) is a silky, more flavorful cousin of our American supermarket canned version. Paired with Black Olive Pesto this tramezzini features staples of the Mediterranean.

MAKES 4 TRAMEZZINI

8 ounces Italian canned tuna

¼ cup caperberries, stems removed, roughly chopped

Juice of 1 lemon

¼ teaspoon red chile flakes

8 tablespoons Black Olive Pesto (page 28)

8 slices white sandwich bread

1. Combine the tuna, caperberries, lemon juice, chile flakes, and 2 tablespoons of the Black Olive Pesto in a medium bowl and mix gently but thoroughly with a fork. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use (can be made up to 2 days ahead).

2. Lay the bread slices on a clean work surface and spread each with about 1 tablespoon of Black Olive Pesto. Spread the tuna mixture over half of the slices in a thin but even layer. Cover with the remaining slices of white bread.

3. Before serving, remove the crusts with a serrated knife and slice diagonally.

BRESAOLA, ARUGULA, AND GRANA PADANO TRAMEZZINI

Some of the best sandwiches are built at the antipasti table, and this is one of them: a cured meat, some cheese, and a little greenery drizzled with extra virgin olive oil.

MAKES 4 TRAMEZZINI

8 slices white sandwich bread

8 slices bresaola

½ cup baby arugula leaves, roughly chopped

Extra virgin olive oil

4 ounces Grana Padano, cut into 8 slices

1. Spread 4 of the bread slices on a work surface. Follow with the 2 slices of bresaola per bread slice (fold the bresaola slices to fit the bread).

2. Top the sandwiches with a generous sprinkling of arugula leaves, a drizzle of olive oil, and then 2 thin slices of Grana Padano per sandwich. Finish with the remaining slices of bread.

3. Before serving, remove the crusts with a serrated knife. Cut the sandwiches in triangles and serve.

MOZZARELLA AND BASIL PESTO TRAMEZZINI

Mozzarella and Basil Pesto are one of those ideal combinations, showing up together in countless ways. Wrapped in wax paper, this is the lunch to take on the road.

MAKES 4 TRAMEZZINI

½ cup Basil Pesto (page 14)

8 slices white sandwich bread

8 ounces fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Spread a thin layer of Basil Pesto over each slice of white bread.
2. Cover half of the bread slices with sliced mozzarella. The layer of mozzarella should be about ¼ inch thick. Season with salt and pepper before covering with the remaining slices of bread.
3. Before serving, use a serrated knife to remove the crusts and cut each sandwich into triangles.

PANCETTA, ARUGULA, AND OVEN-ROASTED TOMATO TRAMEZZINI

In this Italian version of a BLT, diced pancetta is the bacon of choice. We use our Oven-Roasted Tomatoes to make this a year-round favorite. And, as always, the impact of homemade mayonnaise cannot be overstated.

MAKES 4 TRAMEZZINI

8 ounces pancetta, cut into a ½-inch dice

8 slices white bread

½ cup Lemon Mayonnaise (page 17)

1 cup Oven-Roasted Tomatoes (page 24)

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

2 cups baby arugula leaves, roughly chopped

1. In a small skillet, brown the pancetta over a medium flame, stirring occasionally and spooning out the rendered fat as necessary. Cook until browned and nearly crisp, about 5 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the cooked pancetta to a paper towel–lined plate. Set aside.

2. Spread each slice of bread with Lemon Mayonnaise and then a sprinkling of browned pancetta. Follow with 2 or 3 tomato slices, and then season with salt and pepper. Top with small handfuls of chopped arugula before covering with the remaining slices of bread.

3. Before serving, use a serrated knife to remove the crusts and cut the sandwiches into triangles.

CHICKEN TRAMEZZINI

This garlicky chicken salad sandwich is probably the best example of what a tramezzino is all about—a moist, creamy filling on simple white bread. The richness comes from a generous amount of mayonnaise, as is typical of the authentic article.

MAKES 4 TRAMEZZINI

1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 cup Roasted Garlic Mayonnaise (page 17)

8 slices white sandwich bread

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. On a foil-lined baking sheet, rub the chicken breasts with the olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Bake for 15 minutes until they are opaque and slightly firm to the touch. Remove from the oven and let cool to room temperature.
3. Transfer the breasts to a cutting board and cut into a small dice (about ½-inch pieces). Transfer to a mixing bowl. Add the Roasted Garlic Mayonnaise and mix gently to combine. Cover with plastic wrap and chill for at least 2 hours in the refrigerator. The chicken salad can be made up to 2 days ahead.
4. Place 4 slices of the white bread on a clean work surface. Spread each with about ¼ cup of chilled chicken salad and then top with the remaining bread slices.
5. Before serving, use a serrated knife to remove the crusts and cut the sandwiches into triangles.
6. Serve immediately or prepare a tray, cover with damp paper towels, and serve within an hour or two.

EGG SALAD TRAMEZZINI

The yolks of the hard-boiled eggs are crumbled into the freshly made mayonnaise, imparting a golden color and an even richer consistency to this typically creamy tramezzino. Flecks of asparagus add crisp, green appeal.

MAKES 4 TRAMEZZINI

5 large eggs

3 medium asparagus spears, woody stems removed

½ cup plus 2 tablespoons Lemon Mayonnaise (page 17)

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

8 slices white sandwich bread

1. Bring a medium saucepan of water to a boil. Reduce the heat so that the water simmers gently. Using a slotted spoon, gently lower the eggs into the water. Cook for 11 minutes and then let cool.

2. While the eggs are cooking, grill the asparagus on a preheated panini grill. Grill them for 1 minute until they are warm but still have a degree of crispness to them. Transfer to a cutting board and slice on the bias, about ¼ inch thick.

3. Peel the eggs from their shells and use your fingers to break the eggs in half, transferring the yolks to a medium mixing bowl and the whites to a cutting board.

4. Break the yolks with a fork, mashing gently until the yolks resemble cornmeal. Add the sliced asparagus.

5. Roughly chop the whites into small but uneven pieces. Transfer to the mixing bowl and add the mayonnaise. Gently fold the ingredients together. The egg salad should have a creamy consistency, so add a tablespoon or two more mayonnaise if necessary. Add the salt and pepper.

6. Place half of the white bread slices on a clean work surface. Spread about ¼ cup egg salad over each and top with the remaining bread slices.

7. Before serving, use a serrated knife to remove the crusts from the sandwiches and cut into triangles.

CACCIATORINI, SWEET ONION, AND TOMATO TRAMEZZINI

This tramezzino has a bit of crunch and layers of flavor. Use fresh tomatoes if they're in season, Oven-Roasted Tomatoes if they're not.

MAKES 4 TRAMEZZINI

8 slices white bread

8 ounces cacciatorini, thinly sliced

¼ cup Sweet Onions (page 20)

8 slices Oven-Roasted Tomatoes (page 24)

1. Lay 4 of the bread slices out on a clean work surface. Divide the sliced cacciatorini among them and then top with a light layer of Sweet Onions and then 2 slices of Oven-Roasted Tomatoes. Cover with the remaining bread slices.

2. Using a serrated knife, remove the crusts from the sandwiches and cut into triangles. Serve immediately.

TOSCANA CHICKEN LIVER TRAMEZZINI

Simply said, we love a liver sandwich—full-fat, rich, and creamy. While chicken liver crostini are typical of Tuscany, we also serve this slightly spicy spread as a tramezzino. With a slick of Sun-dried Tomato Pesto and watercress, this makes a superb lunch. Store extra chicken liver by pressing plastic wrap to the surface of the chicken liver and refrigerating for up to 2 days.

MAKES 4 TRAMEZZINI

2 ounces pancetta, diced

¼ cup Sweet Onions (page 20)

¼ cup Balsamic Roasted Garlic (page 19)

¼ cup Sun-dried Tomato Pesto (page 16), plus some for spreading on the bread

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1½ teaspoons balsamic vinegar

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 teaspoons red chile flakes

1 pound chicken livers

4 caperberries, sliced

8 slices white sandwich bread

1 cup watercress, leafy tops only, roughly chopped

1. In a small skillet, brown the pancetta over a medium flame, stirring occasionally and spooning out the rendered fat as necessary. Cook until browned and nearly crisp, about 5 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the cooked pancetta to a paper towel–lined plate. Set aside.

2. Combine the Sweet Onions, Balsamic Roasted Garlic, 1 tablespoon of the Sun-dried Tomato Pesto, the browned pancetta, olive oil, balsamic vinegar, salt, pepper, and chile flakes in a medium saucepan. Stir to combine and bring to a boil, about 3 minutes, over a medium-high flame. Lower the flame to medium, stir in the chicken livers, cover, and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes. The livers should have no pink to them. Uncover the pot, raise the heat, and continue to cook until the liquid has reduced by half, about 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Let cool briefly.

3. Transfer the contents of the pot to a blender, add the caperberries and puree until the mixture is smooth and

soft, about 3 minutes. The liver can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 3 days. Let come to room temperature before using.

4. To serve, spread the chicken liver mixture over 4 slices of the bread. Top with a generous sprinkling of watercress. Spread the remaining slices of bread with a thin layer of Sun-dried Tomato Pesto and top with the chicken liver and remaining watercress. Use a serrated knife to remove the crusts and then halve each sandwich diagonally. Serve immediately.

SHRIMP SALAD AND RED PEPPER MAYONNAISE TRAMEZZINI

These tramezzini make a refreshing lunch, especially when paired with a crisp Italian white wine, such as a Frascati, or cut the tramezzini into four triangles rather than two and serve as tea sandwiches.

MAKES 2 CUPS SHRIMP SALAD, SERVES 4

1 cup Lemon Mayonnaise (page 17)

1 cup Peperonata (page 23)

1 pound shrimp (about 35 to 37), shells on

1 teaspoon olive oil

Juice of 1 lemon

Pinch of red chile flakes

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, plus more for topping

8 slices white bread

1 cup baby arugula leaves

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.

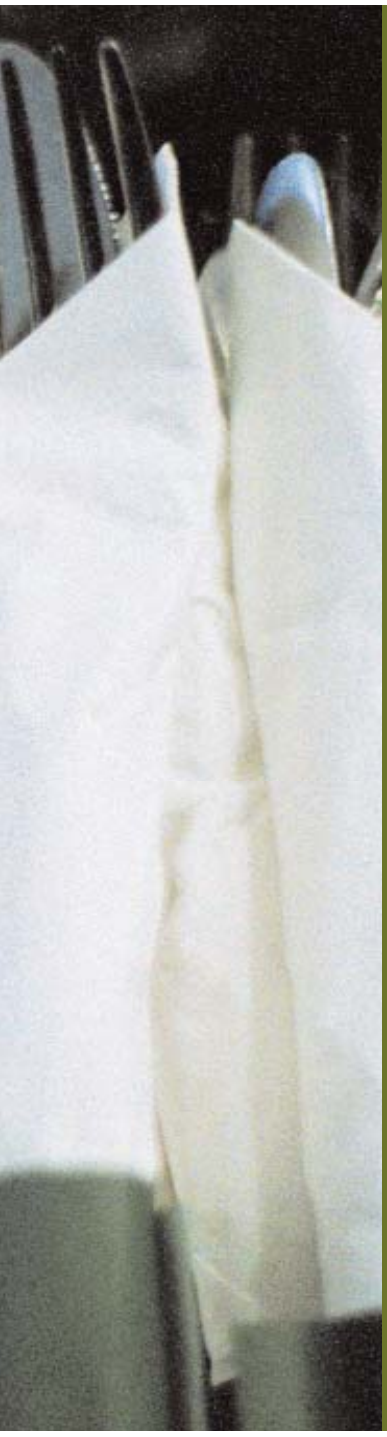
2. In a food processor, combine the Lemon Mayonnaise and the Peperonata. Pulse until the red pepper mixture is thoroughly worked into the mayonnaise.

3. Combine the shrimp, olive oil, lemon juice, chile flakes, and ¼ teaspoon black pepper in a medium bowl. Toss to coat. Spread the shrimp on a small baking sheet and transfer to the preheated oven. Bake for 15 minutes until the shrimp are pink and firm. Remove the tails and shells.

4. Roughly chop the shrimp into chunks and transfer to a medium mixing bowl. Add the red pepper mayonnaise. Add salt to taste. Stir with a rubber spatula until well combined. Cover with plastic wrap and chill for at least 1 hour or over-night.

5. Top 4 of the bread slices with about ½ cup of the chilled shrimp salad and a few arugula leaves. Season each sandwich with freshly ground pepper before topping with the remaining slices of bread. Use a serrated knife to remove the crusts and then halve each sandwich diagonally.

ANTIPASTI, MERENDE, AND INSALATE



OUR FAVORITE PART OF ANY MEAL IS THE INTRODUCTION TO IT. Antipasti are a great way to set the tone for an evening or afternoon of leisurely eating. The taste and textures of salty anchovies and olives are a sharp and pleasing contrast to the silkiness of richly flavored sliced meats. Add to that the bright flavors of seasonal vegetables, and the table comes to life.

Merende can be thought of as civilized snacking: From a midmorning salad with cheese, to a late-afternoon slice of frittata, merende are little dishes meant to satisfy hunger between meals, or to take the place of a meal when a little something, rather than a full repast, will do. It's an Italian custom that we are happy to adopt as our own.

The recipes in this chapter can be served as a prelude to dinner or as a means of sustenance well beforehand.

OLIVE BOWL

We set out small bowls of these rustic olives before dinner or at the start of a party. Use oil-cured olives like Gaeta, bitettos, cerignolas, or Sicilian Colossals—their soft skins soak up the flavor of the Balsamic Roasted Garlic and Sun-dried Tomato Pesto. Make these ahead, but always serve them at room temperature.

MAKES 3 CUPS

3 cups Gaeta or assorted olives, drained of their liquid

½ cup Balsamic Roasted Garlic (page 19)

¼ cup Sun-dried Tomato Pesto (page 16)

Combine all the ingredients in a large bowl. Stir to combine. Divide among smaller serving bowls. Prepare the olives at least 1 day in advance for full flavor. Store, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. Bring to room temperature before serving.

BELL'INO

We love to start an evening off with our casual take on the classic Bellini cocktail. We make ours with Prosecco, the Italian bubbly, in place of French Champagne. We use fresh peach puree when peaches are at their peak, but for the rest of the year, the frozen variety gets the job done. Try fresh melon in place of peaches for a colorful and refreshing variation.

MAKES 6 DRINKS

1 cup peach puree (about 4 large peaches)

One 750-ml bottle Prosecco

1. If using fresh peaches, peel them by dropping them in rapidly boiling water for 1 minute. Remove them with a slotted spoon and, when cool enough to handle, remove the skins easily with a paring knife. Split the peaches, remove the pits, and drop them in a blender or food processor. Pulse to a smooth puree. Store, covered, in the freezer.

2. Divide the peach puree among 4 wineglasses. Fill each glass to the top with Prosecco, stir, and offer a toast before drinking.

SALUMI PLATTER

Salumi is a broad category of pork products. Italy produces a whole peninsula's worth of hard salamis and cured hams, such as prosciutto. From inexpensive to hard-to-find, Italian salumi are often compared to American cold cuts but, aside from requiring the services of a slicer (and even those differ), the comparison stops there. Italians often begin a meal with a cutting board covered with regional salamis and delicately sliced hams. Also known as *affettati*, a meat course served as an antipasto, a salumi platter is a great way to start a long lunch. Eating with your fingers is an immediate icebreaker, making for instant familiarity with everyone at the table.

We serve two pieces of grilled rustic bread per person and hope to discourage them from whatever make-their-own-sandwich inclinations they may have—the goal is not to pile it on, but rather to peel a slice from the platter and enjoy it unto itself. Like a good cheese platter, a cured-meat tray should have a variety of textures and colors. And, like cheese, the full flavors of the meats are best when they're at room temperature, not cold. As the number of people you want to serve increases, add to the variety of meats.

Variety is key, and quality matters most, so avoid the shrink-wrapped refrigerator case and go directly to the best Italian deli (*salumeria*) or gourmet grocer that you can find to assemble a platter of some of the same meats we use to make our sandwiches (see "The Meat," page 3). An American interest in artisanally made salumi has spawned some excellent mail-order salami (we especially love what Armandino Batali, Mario Batali's dad, is producing in Seattle).

TRUFFLED EGG TOAST

Depending on the time of day, this toast can be served as either a filling breakfast or a light lunch or dinner. The runny yolks of the eggs serve as a rich sauce for the bread, cheese, and asparagus, and the aroma of the truffle oil is irresistible. Buy an unsliced loaf of bread and cut thick slices by hand. The bread should be substantial enough to hold up to the weight of the eggs and cheese.

MAKES 4 TOASTS

2 asparagus spears, woody stems removed

4 slices of bread, 1 inch thick

8 thin slices of Fontina (about 6 ounces)

8 large eggs

3 tablespoons truffle-infused oil

½ teaspoons coarse sea salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat a panini grill. Grill the asparagus spears for 2 minutes until they appear roasted but are still crunchy. Transfer to a cutting board and slice thinly on the diagonal. Set aside.

2. In a toaster oven, lightly toast the slices of bread. Transfer the toasts to a baking sheet. Use a serrated knife to score a 2-inch square in the center of the toasts. Use the handle end of the knife to tamp the squares down, creating indentations to contain the eggs. Cut each Fontina slice into 4 wide strips and form a border around the flattened centers of the bread (there should be no cheese overhang). Crack and separate each egg, sliding 2 yolks into the center of each slice of bread (the whites can be discarded or used for egg-white omelets).

3. Return the baking sheet to the toaster oven (or a conventional oven preheated to 350°F) and, using a high setting, toast until the cheese has melted and begins to

bubble, about 3 minutes. (For those who fear an undercooked egg, cook the toasts for an additional 2 minutes until the yellows have set.)

4. Transfer the toasts to small serving plates, stir the yolks with the tip of the knife (they should be runny), and garnish with asparagus slices. Drizzle a generous amount of truffle oil over each and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

FENNEL, RED ONION, AND GOAT CHEESE FRITTATA

Frittatas are a mainstay of our home table. With fillings that range from leftover spaghetti (frittatas are the quintessential Italian vehicle for last night's pasta) to anything you'd ordinarily fold into an omelet, they can be served for brunch, lunch, or dinner.

Be sure to use a pan that has an ovenproof handle.

MAKES ONE 9-INCH FRITTATA;
SERVES 4 TO 6

1 fennel bulb, tough outer layers removed

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

1 teaspoon salt plus a pinch

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper plus a pinch

½ lemon

6 large eggs

½ cup whole milk

½ cup diced red onion

1 tablespoon butter

4 ounces fresh goat cheese

¼ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

1. Preheat the broiler.

2. Slice the fennel bulb in half, cut out the core, and then cut into quarters. Thinly slice the fennel. Place half of the fennel in a medium bowl and dress with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, the balsamic vinegar, and a pinch of salt and pepper. Follow with a squeeze of lemon juice. Toss gently and set aside.

3. Combine the eggs, milk, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1 teaspoon pepper in a medium bowl. Mix vigorously with a fork and set aside.

4. Using an 9-inch nonstick ovenproof skillet, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat for about 1 minute. Add the remaining sliced fennel and the onion. Cook until the vegetables are soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the butter and toss the vegetables to coat. Spread the fennel and onion evenly over the bottom of the pan.

continued

5. Raise the heat to medium-high and add the egg mixture. After a minute or so, use a rubber spatula to begin lifting the cooked edges while tilting the pan; the large eggs that haven't yet set will flow under the cooked edges. Continue this all around the rim of the pan. The edge and bottom of the frittata will begin to thicken while the top remains moist. After approximately 7 minutes, the edge of the frittata will begin to thicken and the top of the frittata will be fairly well set. Drop the goat cheese by tablespoons evenly over the frittata, followed by an even sprinkling of Parmigiano-Reggiano.

6. Slide the frittata under the broiler and cook for about 3 minutes until the top is well browned. Remove from the broiler and let stand for 5 minutes before inverting onto a serving plate. Let cool from hot to warm. Slice into 6 small wedges (or 4 big ones). Top with a heap of the lightly dressed fennel slices.

PANCETTA, ARUGULA, AND PECORINO PEPATO FRITTATA

Bacon and eggs are natural partners, and this frittata combines the two. If you can't find pancetta at the butcher counter, use the equivalent amount of American bacon. Serve with a lightly dressed arugula salad to bring out the flavor in the frittata.

MAKES ONE 9-INCH FRITTATA; SERVES 4 TO 6

2 ounces pancetta, diced

6 large eggs

½ cup whole milk

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

3 tablespoons butter

1½ cups baby arugula leaves

2 ounces Pecorino Pepato, thinly sliced

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1. Preheat the broiler.

2. In a 9-inch nonstick sauté pan with an ovenproof handle, brown the pancetta over a medium flame, stirring occasionally and spooning out the rendered fat as necessary. Cook until browned and nearly crisp, about 5 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the pancetta to a paper towel–lined plate. Set aside. Discard the rendered fat and wipe the pan clean with a paper towel.

3. Combine the eggs, milk, ½ teaspoon of the salt, and ¼ teaspoon of the pepper in a medium bowl. Blend well with a fork and set aside.

4. Set the pan over a medium flame and heat it for a moment. Add the butter and, when the foam subsides, add the pancetta. Use a spatula to spread the pancetta evenly over the bottom of the pan and then pour in the egg mixture. After a minute or so, use a rubber spatula to begin lifting the cooked edges while tilting the pan; the eggs that haven't yet set will flow under the cooked edges. Continue this all around the rim of the pan. The edge and bottom of the frittata will begin to thicken while the top remains moist. Sprinkle ½ cup of the

arugula over the surface of the frittata, and use the spatula to press the leaves gently into the eggs. When the eggs have mostly set, after about 7 minutes, pull the pan from the heat and cover the frittata with the slices of Pecorino Pepato. Place the skillet under the broiler until the cheese has melted and is lightly browned, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from the broiler, let cool for 1 to 2 minutes, and invert on a serving platter.

5. Whisk together the olive oil, the remaining salt and pepper, and the balsamic vinegar. Toss with the remaining arugula. Cut the frittata into wedges and serve with a small helping of the dressed salad alongside.

POTATO AND WATERCRESS FRITTATA

From the Spanish *torta* to American scrambled eggs and hash browns, potatoes and eggs are a match made in breakfast heaven.

MAKES ONE 9-INCH FRITTATA; SERVES 4 TO 6

2 small Yukon gold potatoes, about 4 ounces each

6 large eggs

½ cup whole milk

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

3 tablespoons olive oil

½ cup roughly chopped watercress (leaves only)

2 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano, grated using the large holes of a box grater (about ¼ cup)

1. Preheat the broiler.

2. Place the potatoes in a medium saucepan. Fill the pot with water until the water rises about 2 inches over the potatoes. Set over a high flame. Bring to a boil and cook the potatoes for 15 minutes. They should be soft when pierced with a fork but still hold their shape. Set aside and, when cool enough to handle, peel the skins and cut into 1-inch chunks.

3. Combine the eggs, milk, salt, and pepper. Blend well with a fork.

4. Set a 9-inch nonstick pan with an ovenproof handle over a medium flame. Add the olive oil and heat for about 1 minute. Add the potato chunks and sauté for about 2 minutes, letting the potatoes soak in the olive oil and brown a bit.

5. Add the egg mixture. After a minute or so, use a rubber spatula to begin lifting the cooked edges while tilting the pan; the eggs that haven't yet set will flow under the cooked edges. Continue this all around the rim of the pan. The edge and bottom of the frittata will begin to

thicken while the top remains moist. Sprinkle the chopped watercress over the surface of the frittata, and use the spatula to press the leaves gently into the eggs. When the eggs have mostly set, after about 7 minutes, pull the pan from the heat and cover the frittata with the grated Parmigiano-Reggiano. Put the skillet under the broiler until the cheese has melted and browned. Let cool for 5 minutes before inverting onto a serving platter.

BRESAOLA WITH ARUGULA AND PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO

Bresaola, or raw beef that's cured in salt and then air-dried, is a classic first course. Olive oil and lemon juice bring out the best in these paper-thin slices. Serve the bresaola under the greens to keep the delicate meat from drying out. As with prosciutto, buy bresaola on the same day you intend on serving it.

SERVES 4

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

3 cups baby arugula

16 slices bresaola

1 lemon, halved

4 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano, shaved using a vegetable peeler

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Combine the olive oil and balsamic vinegar in a medium bowl. Whisk together and add the arugula. Toss gently, using clean hands.

2. To serve, divide the bresaola among 4 plates, arranging the slices in a circle. Top each serving with a light drizzle of olive oil and a squeeze of fresh lemon juice. Top each with a handful of dressed arugula. Garnish each with the Parmigiano-Reggiano shavings, and finish with a sprinkling of salt and a few turns of a pepper mill. Serve immediately with a few toasts alongside.

MIXED GREENS WITH ROASTED GARLIC VINAIGRETTE

Our roasted garlic vinaigrette is deep and dark, almost chocolaty in texture, with strong flavors and great balance. Use clean hands to toss the greens so that each leaf is lightly coated. The dressing keeps, covered, in the refrigerator for up to five days.

SERVES 4

½ cup Balsamic Roasted Garlic (page 19)

½ cup balsamic vinegar

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

6 ounces mesclun (mixed greens)

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. For the dressing, combine the Balsamic Roasted Garlic, balsamic vinegar, and olive oil in a blender. Blend until smooth. The consistency should be that of thin pancake batter. Add more oil if necessary.
2. In a large salad bowl, drizzle the dressing over the salad greens, tossing as you go, until the greens are lightly coated. Divide among 4 serving bowls and season each with salt and pepper.

FENNEL AND ARUGULA SALAD WITH GOAT CHEESE AND ACETO BALSAMICO

Try this plate of crisp, sweet fennel decorated with dark green arugula leaves even if you're a less than enthusiastic fennel fan. The humble ingredients take on a new life with a luxurious dash of best-quality aged balsamic vinegar.

SERVES 4

2 fennel bulbs, about 7 ounces each

1 cup baby arugula leaves

Extra virgin olive oil

Aceto Balsamico

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

8 ounces fresh goat cheese

1. Remove the tough outer layer of the fennel bulbs and slice each in half through the stem end. Make a triangular cut to remove the core from each half. With the flat side facing down on a cutting board, slice each bulb into ¼-inch slices. Transfer the slices to a medium bowl as you finish. Add the arugula leaves and toss thoroughly to combine.

2. Combine the olive oil and Aceto Balsamico in a small bowl. Whisk vigorously.

3. Pour the olive oil and Aceto Balsamico over the fennel and arugula, and toss to coat the salad with the dressing. Season with salt and pepper.

4. Divide the salad among 4 serving plates. Crumble the goat cheese over each salad and serve immediately.

ROMAINE AND CUCUMBER SALAD WITH SUN-DRIED TOMATO PESTO

Romaine lettuce and cucumbers are staples of almost everyone's crisper drawer. Here, these simple ingredients are dressed up with bits of crunchy pancetta and sun-dried tomato dressing.

SERVES 4

4 ounces pancetta, diced

½ cup sun-dried tomatoes, roughly chopped

1 cup extra virgin olive oil

Juice of 1 lemon

1 cucumber

Romaine lettuce, cut across the rib into ½-inch strips

½ cup grated Cacio di Roma or Pecorino Romano

1. Over a medium-low flame, brown the pancetta in a small skillet until crisp, about 12 minutes. Spoon off the rendered fat every few minutes for the best browning results. The pancetta should be crisp but not hard. Set aside on paper towels to cool.

2. Combine the sun-dried tomatoes, olive oil, and lemon juice in a blender or food processor. Pulse to form a rough but cohesive dressing (the dressing can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 5 days).

3. Peel the cucumber and cut lengthwise into quarters, discarding the ends. Then slice into ½-inch slices. Combine the quarter-moon–shaped slices with the sliced romaine. Toss gently to combine, and divide among 4 plates. Spoon about 3 tablespoons of sun-dried tomato dressing over each salad followed by a sprinkling of pancetta. Finish by sprinkling the grated Cacio di Roma over each salad (we like the broad strips you get from using the widest holes on a box grater).

HEIRLOOM TOMATOES WITH BASIL PESTO

In the summer, when we have access to prized heirloom tomatoes, we serve this basic and beautiful dish. Ideally, let the tomatoes warm in the sun, use pesto still cold from the fridge, and bread hot off the grill.

SERVES 4

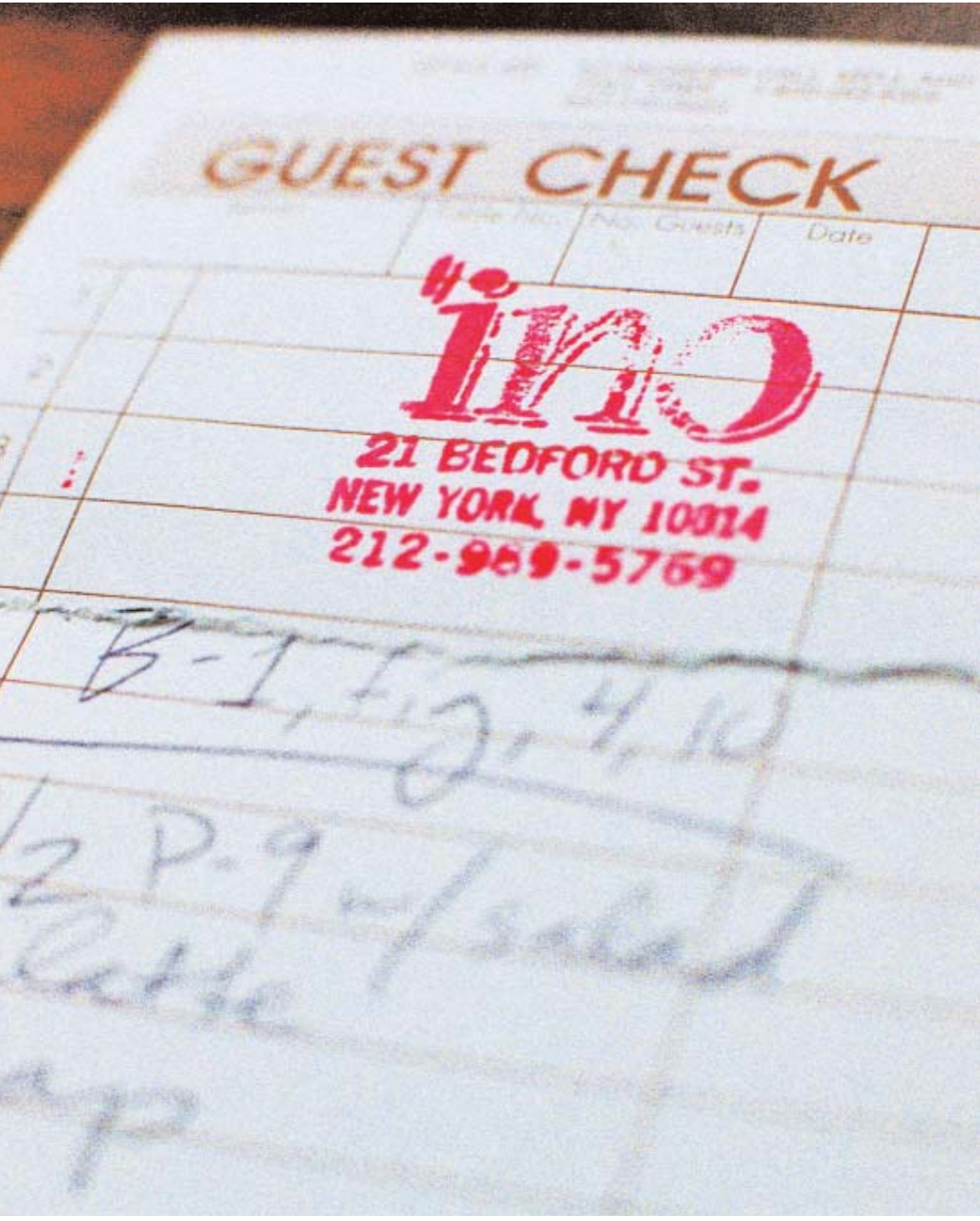
6 heirloom tomatoes, of varied colors and sizes

1 teaspoon sea salt

⅔ cup cold Basil Pesto (page 14), stirred vigorously

8 slices rustic bread or baguette, grilled or toasted

Slice the tomatoes about ½ inch thick, and spread on a white serving platter. Sprinkle evenly with sea salt. Spoon a trail of pesto over and around the tomatoes. Serve immediately with grilled bread.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ITALIAN TUNA WITH MIXED GREENS

This standout salad is light but satisfying. We always keep the components on hand at home, ready to go for lunch or dinner.

SERVES 4

8 ounces Italian canned tuna, packed in oil

8 caperberries, stems removed, thinly sliced

Juice of 1 lemon

¼ teaspoon red chile flakes

3 tablespoons Black Olive Pesto (page 28)

Freshly ground black pepper

¼ cup olive oil

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Salt

4 ounces mesclun mix, washed and spun dry

1. In a medium bowl, combine the tuna, caperberries, lemon juice, chile flakes, and Black Olive Pesto. Flake the tuna with a fork while incorporating the other ingredients. Season to taste with freshly ground black pepper. Chill or serve at room temperature.

2. Whisk together the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, salt, and pepper to taste. In a medium bowl, dress the lettuces, using your clean hands to toss the greens.

3. Divide the dressed lettuces among 4 serving plates, with a portion of the tuna mixture on top.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My inspiration for this business started with my uncle Harry Denton, who gave me my first real restaurant job and locked me in a room until I could tie my own bow tie. It was during those years in California that I was lucky enough to work for and with some great people like David O'Malley, who I continue to admire and learn from.

A world of gratitude goes to Mario Batali, who introduced me to the real meaning of Italian cuisine—his expertise and enthusiasm are awe-inspiring.

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Steve Crain, who hired me way back when and introduced me to the New York restaurant scene that I've settled into—the chefs, waiters, and bartenders who come into 'ino after work are truly a great community to be a part of. They are among our most valued customers.

Our 'ino staff, each of whom brings something special to the mix, completely rocks. Past and present, they've all contributed greatly and have my great appreciation.

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—JASON

This book would never have happened without the support of our great staff at 'ino and our longstanding customers. It is this mix of people that help make 'ino more than just a sandwich shop. Cheers to all our friends and family who shared many a glass of wine with us and help make 'ino more home than work. To Sandra and Mona and my father, Richard Gripenberg, who helped us get off our feet back in the day. I'd also like to thank Vicky Bijur, Susan Friedland, and Harriet Bell for making this cookbook a reality. To Mike Piazza for taking a great photo and to Kathryn Kellinger, a great writer and friend, your contribution has been immeasurable. And my greatest thanks and admiration to Jason Denton—the perfect husband and partner. You're still the best waiter a girl could ask for.

—JENNIFER

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And my deepest gratitude to my neighbors, friends, and collaborators, Jennifer and Jason Denton whom I met a few too many years ago while they were painting the walls of their new neighborhood restaurant—a place where relationships formed, weddings were planned, and kids were an idea discussed over loud music and late-night wine. Their warmth, enthusiasm, and passion for all things delicious is apparent in everything they do. Working together on this book has been my great pleasure. Future collaborations include meals big and small, from the West Village to the East End. You make the coffee, I'll bring the pie.

And to Lee Hanson and our daughters Maya and Reid. Somewhere between all of you is the best sandwich I know.

—KATHRYN KELLINGER

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Credits

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